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## I Visit the Antipodes

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*By the same Author :*

PHOTOGRAPHING WILD LIFE ACROSS THE WORLD

THE ISLAND OF PENGUINS

MY FRIEND TOTO

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*By*  
CHERRY KEARTON  
I Visit the Antipodes

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*With 68 Illustrations*

SECOND IMPRESSION

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CHAPTER I

*Dedicated to Captain Cook*

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## CHAPTER I

### DEDICATED TO CAPTAIN COOK

“CAPTAIN COOK, I salute you!” I softly murmured these words to myself as I stood alone in a gathering twilight of purple and grey before the impressive monument to “The Prince of Navigators,” which stands high up on a lonely headland at Whitby, framed in the wild Yorkshire moors. It was here that Captain Cook began his active life, and dreamed of the ambitious adventures which later turned into the realities which gained him immortality. Strangely enough, I was born in a Yorkshire village less than fifty miles from the spot where this great pioneer first saw the light of day, and as this book is a record of my experiences in Australia and New Zealand, I decided to begin it with a tribute to his memory, for having wandered to the farthest corners of the globe and returned, after perilous adventures, to the placidity and security of my little native village, I know just how Captain Cook must have felt when he was facing almost uncharted seas on his way to unknown lands, when he thought of the Yorkshire moorlands he had left behind.

When I visited some of the scenes of his explorations in Australia and New Zealand the romantic nature of his rise to world fame staggered me. He came from humble stock, with neither money nor influence to aid him, and, in a tiny ship of 450 tons, braved the mighty seas on a voyage that must have seemed without end. We who to-day glide swiftly across oceans in palatial floating hotels cannot

realize the risks and the terrors which faced the early explorers. Without steam, at the mercy of the savage winds, and with inadequate food and water, Captain Cook sailed to Australia, but how he succeeded and the amount of determination and courage he must have possessed few to-day can realize.

When I had read the inscription on the monument I decided to recapture the past by visiting his home and his school, and as many of the scenes of his early life which still existed. In the Whitby Museum I found a great deal of information and saw many interesting relics, including models of his ships, which, by the way, were built at Whitby.

Armed with data, I motored some miles inland to Great Ayton, where Captain Cook went to school, and there saw the little classroom and his desk. Nearby is Easby Hill, upon which stands a monument to his memory, which is a landmark that is visible for miles around. I passed by this on my way to Marton, the village in which he was born. Here a granite vase marks the site of his birthplace. It is protected from the windswept, undulating country surrounding it by groups of stately trees, and clustering around the base of the vase are masses of flowers. A spirit of calmness and peace pervades the scene, which is simply beautiful because it is so beautifully simple—a perfect memorial to the humble origin of a truly great man. Within a stone's throw is the old, old church wherein he was baptized, and, close to the font, there is a memorial window to his memory.

Reluctantly, I turned from these quiet, sad scenes, and as I journeyed home I saw again a picture which had impressed itself vividly on my mind when I was at school—"The child, and what he may become." It had a new significance as I recalled Captain Cook's early life. He was born over two hundred years ago, and his father was a farm hand. There was no seafaring blood coursing through his veins, and yet he was to become the world's first scientific navigator, and one who practically added a continent to the British Empire.

When he was a few years old his family moved to Great Ayton, and at the age of thirteen he left school and worked on a farm with his father, but four years later started in commerce as a shop assistant at Staithes on the coast. Here he came into touch with those who wrested their living from the sea, and his friendship with fishermen and sailors naturally gave him many opportunities to listen to their adventures. This contact changed the course of his life, and he soon answered the call of the sea by becoming apprenticed to John Walker, a Quaker shipowner. Thus the young adventurer soon found himself at sea on a 450-ton Whitby barque named *Freelove*.

At the age of twenty-one he was rated as an A.B., and until 1755 he sailed in John Walker's ships. Throughout this time he missed no opportunity of gaining experience in seamanship, and it was common knowledge that the shrewd old Quaker had observed the clever and alert nature of the boy and marked him for promotion. However, trouble

came with France, and Able-Seaman Cook realized that capable seamen would be wanted in the Navy, and so he entered His Majesty's Service on June 17th, 1755. Promotion in war-time is rapid, and within a month he was master's mate.

Four years later he sailed for Canada to fight with Wolfe against the French, and he was present at the famous landing beneath the Heights of Abraham. Here he was appointed to take soundings of the river immediately opposite the enemy's entrenched camp at Montmorency, and he executed this task to the complete satisfaction of his superiors, and in doing so narrowly escaped being cut off by a party of Indians. His work was so accurate that he was given the task of surveying the whole of the St. Lawrence River below Quebec.

When he ultimately returned in 1763 he married a Miss Elizabeth Batts of Barking, in Essex, but within six months he was called upon to command a survey expedition to Newfoundland which occupied him for four years off the Newfoundland coast, with only short periods of leave.

Five years after this the Government agreed to furnish a vessel for an expedition to observe the transit of Venus from the South Seas, and Cook was chosen to take command.

The immortal *Endeavour*, a barque of 368 tons with twenty-two guns, carried the observation group, and Cook received his commission as lieutenant. It sailed from Plymouth on August 26th, 1768, with ninety-four people and eighteen months' provisions aboard.



After the party had carried out their astronomical observations Cook received orders to try and discover the legendary Terra Australis. After voyaging on and calling at several other islands the battered little barque finally arrived on the shores of New Zealand, where they experienced for the first time hostility from natives. The Maoris opposed their landing, but the expedition moved along the coast, charting and surveying, although almost everywhere the New Zealanders were antagonistic. Nevertheless, through storm and sunshine in hitherto uncharted seas, the *Endeavour* completed the circuit of both islands, and then left New Zealand on March 31st, 1770, ultimately to anchor for the first time in Australian waters on April 29th.

The ship then headed north along the treacherous New South Wales coast, and some thirteen hundred miles had been covered before the expedition experienced its worst accident, for the *Endeavour* struck a coral reef which tore a hole in her bottom. Luckily the coral remained in the hole it had made, otherwise she would certainly have sunk the moment she was pulled off the reef. For a whole day the exhausted explorers struggled to drag her free, and only when they had almost given up hope did they succeed. Then, with every available man, she crawled into Endeavour River. With the few tools they possessed the men repaired the vessel, their task made doubly hard by the antagonism of marauding savages.

On August 4th she again set sail and eventually

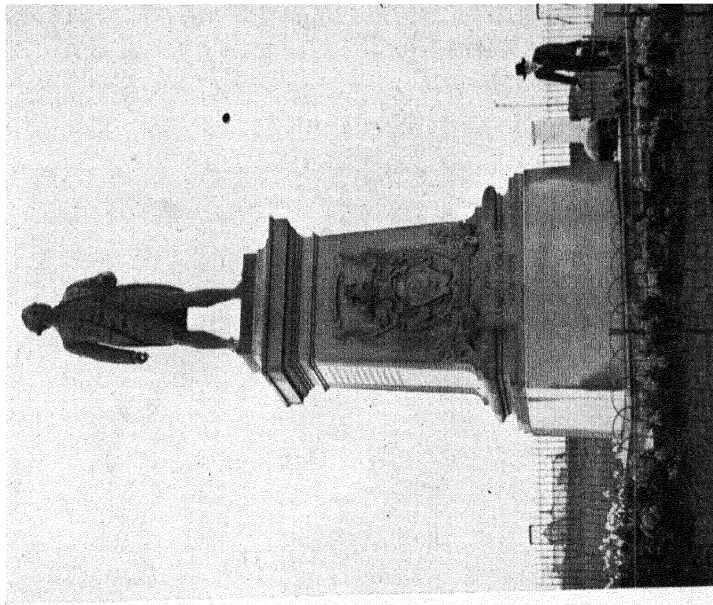
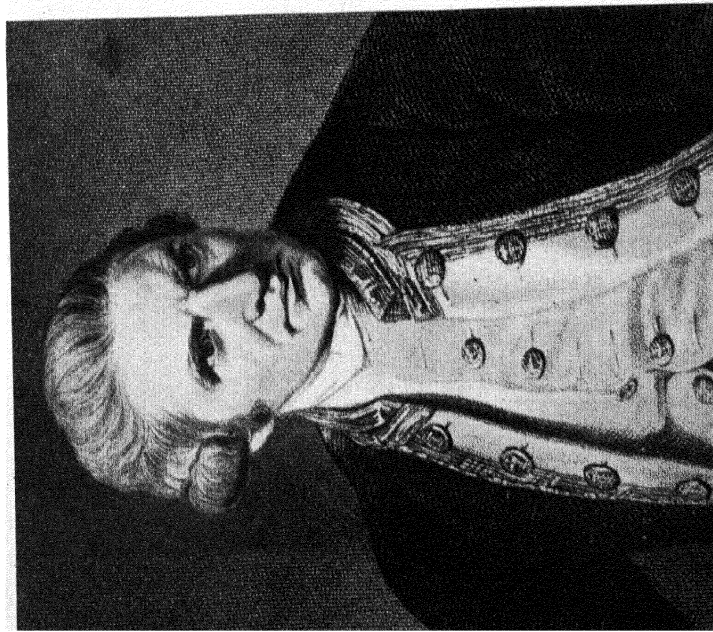
reached Batavia, where most of the crew were attacked by fever, which their weakened condition made it difficult to combat, but a few Dutch settlers were very kind and did everything possible. Yet, in spite of their help, when the boat left Batavia on January 29th, 1771, forty men were in the doctor's hands, and twenty deaths were registered before the vessel rounded the Cape.

On July 13th, 1771, the gallant little vessel reached England, and on August 14th Cook was received by the King to tell of his surprising adventures and important discoveries, for which he was rewarded with a captain's commission.

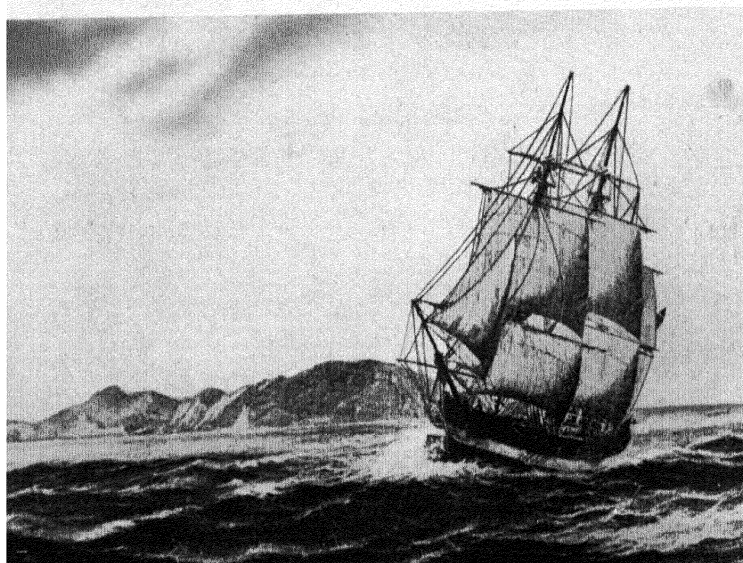
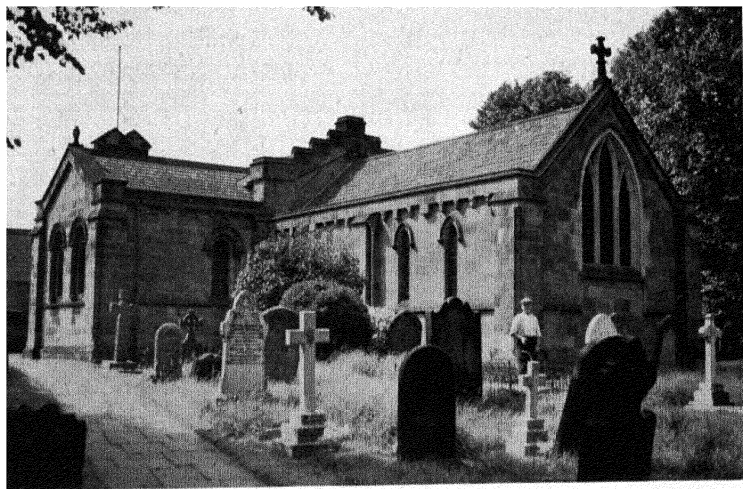
Captain Cook's second voyage to the South Seas was to settle the question of the existence of a southern continent. The vessels chosen were the *Resolution* and *Adventure*, both built at Whitby.

Before sailing in July, 1772, Cook visited his aged father at Great Ayton and his former employer at Whitby. The expedition eventually entered the Antarctic Circle in the following January, and was dangerously hampered by fog and ice-floes, and, to make matters even more serious, the *Resolution* lost sight of her consort. However, Cook made for New Zealand, hoping that the *Adventure*, commanded by Captain Furneaux, would be there.

After a long search the missing barque was found in Queen Charlotte's Sound, and once again the gallant ships sailed in company. But the southern continent could not be discovered, and as scurvy had broken out amongst the crew Cook altered their course for Tahiti. His welcome there was



CAPTAIN JAMES COOK AND HIS MONUMENT AT WHITBY



(Above) MARTON CHURCH WHERE CAPTAIN COOK WAS  
BAPTISED, 1728

(Below) THE GOOD SHIP *ENDEAVOUR*

not as warm as before, and so he moved onwards, heading for New Zealand once again, but when the *Resolution* reached Queen Charlotte's Sound her sister ship was missing. After waiting there for three weeks Cook steered eastward to continue his task, eventually heading in search of the *Adventure* again, but when he sought news of her from the New Zealanders he was horrified to learn that her crew had been killed and eaten !

Left with no alternative, he returned, weary and unaccompanied, to England, but upon arrival his sadness turned to joy, for almost the first to welcome his ship was Captain Furneaux. It transpired that he had lost several men to the cannibals, but the majority of his crew had escaped. Cook was promoted to post-captain's rank, and honours were showered upon him by the leading scientific societies.

It would seem by now that Cook had served his country sufficiently to deserve a respite, but early in 1776 he volunteered to lead a third expedition, and this proved to be his last.

The *Resolution* and the *Discovery* sailed under orders for the Cape, New Zealand, the Society Islands, and the Pacific coast of North America, it being hoped that Cook would discover a passage between the Pacific Ocean and Hudson's Bay. They reached New Zealand in February, 1777, and there, among the islands, the expedition had many interesting and dangerous experiences, during which they discovered several new islands, particularly the group now called the Sandwich Isles.

In 1778 they explored a great part of the western

coast of North America, passed Behring Strait in August, and, having in vain attempted to find a northern passage into the Atlantic, returned to winter at the Sandwich Isles, and it was here that our immortal countryman ended his career of glory. After spending several months in friendly intercourse with the natives, particularly those of Owhyhee, he sailed on February 4th, 1779 ; but as the *Resolution* received serious damage in a storm he returned a week later. This return proved fatal to our great commander, who, in taking strong measures for the recovery of some stolen property, was fiercely attacked by the natives, and, not being adequately supported by his men in the boats, was barbarously massacred on February 14th, 1779. His bones, and other remains which the savages were compelled to deliver up, were committed to the deep in Karakakooa Bay a few days later, amidst the heartfelt grief of the survivors.

Captain Cook, a splendid giant of a man with an iron constitution, was at heart a simple, kindly fellow, who lived strictly and vigorously, and this, together with his habitual temperance, helped to equip him for those arduous enterprises which his bold and penetrating genius, his indefatigable application, and undeviating perseverance, eminently qualified him to undertake.

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CHAPTER II

*Sydney, Zoo, National Park*

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## CHAPTER II

### SYDNEY, ZOO, NATIONAL PARK

**A**FTER a life spent in search of Nature's wonders, during which I have penetrated into the farthest and the darkest corners of Africa, wandered into the strangest parts of the East, and photographed wild life in places which few if any white men have ever seen, I decided to turn my attention to the Commonwealth of Australia, and I can say, without exaggeration, that despite the majesty of the endless African jungles, and the unending pageant of queer creatures, large and small, which I have encountered all over the world, I have never set eyes on so many extraordinary oddities as I found in Australia and New Zealand.

It was in November, 1935, that I sailed from England in search of the sun and any adventure which might be lurking about, and although my ultimate destination was Australia I visited the Dutch East Indies, staying in and around Java for quite a while. In this home of marvellous temples, showing the wonderful work of bygone ages, and active volcanoes, the peaks of some rising to 10,000 feet, I revelled in the rich colouring Nature had arrayed everything with. The vegetation of Java is extraordinary to behold, and forests occupy about one-fifth of the whole surface. Endless rice-fields, acres devoted to the cultivation of maize, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, rubber, make this tropical, lovely, and dangerous island a place of unusual fascination and industry. I have a smattering of the Javanese

language, which has evolved from Kavi, but I would not like to depend on it.

Java contains 48,500 square miles, and to walk the distance of but one of them in the intense heat is an effort, but I did penetrate into the dense jungles, and secured many photographs. On leaving Java we passed through the Great Barrier Reef, threading our way through the lovely chain of islands inside the coral belt. Here was a painter's paradise—the islands being burnt brown by the tropical sun, and fringed by dull green foliage right down to the water's edge. These colours merged into the rich blue of the sea, and the powdery clouds in the sky created an unforgettable picture of beautiful colouring—yet over all was a sense of desolation.

Having safely navigated the tortuous passage known as the gateway to the tropics, we entered Brisbane, and instantaneously knew we were in another world, for here was an up-to-the-minute town which, although built on the banks of a river, was devoid of flatness, the ground rising steeply behind it—throwing the buildings into sharp relief. Many of the houses reminded me of Bandoeng, in Java, being of the bungalow type, surrounded by verandahs, over which gorgeous creepers twined and interlaced themselves into entrancing patterns, which harmonized with the surrounding palms and flowering trees. Yet of all the profuse blooms the jacaranda flower is my favourite, with its vivid colour and abundant clusters.

During my stay most of my time was spent in motor cars, for I was fascinated by the luxurious

semi-tropical vegetation around Brisbane, and it was my wish to cover as much of the ground as possible.

But it was on arrival in Sydney that the spirit of Australia descended upon me, filling me with a feeling akin to loneliness, which, however, soon wore off. Nevertheless its presence interested me, for I am a hardened traveller and have forgotten what it feels like to be homesick in distant lands. I discovered that the reason was due to the fact that Australia stands utterly alone, far, far away from all the other nations.

When you remember that New Zealand is one thousand two hundred miles distant, and that Australia's only real neighbours are some tropical islands linking her to Asia, you will understand why the traveller feels cut off from the world as he steps into this vast country, standing in magnificent isolation in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. He feels he has left all the other bits and pieces of the world far behind. But here is the paradox, for immediately he glances at Sydney he has a most pleasant surprise, because he finds himself confronted by one of the most progressive and elegant sights in the world—Sydney resembling in many ways New York City. On second thoughts it appears to be a subtle blending of New York, with charming reminders of the Mediterranean coast, mingled with tropical foliage and, here and there, suggestions of the vast deserts beyond.

Australian hospitality is a feature never to be forgotten, for one is fêted, cheered, and entertained

on a scale beyond comparison—there being a fine, care-free spirit of honesty about the citizens—something that makes you feel genuinely at home after the first hand you have shaken. Their buildings, whether flats, shops, or cinemas, are palatial—their thoroughfares stately and sensibly wide, and their seaside amenities a delight to look upon. Australia enjoys itself to the full, and I attribute the zest with which everybody lives and, incidentally, works, to the fact that they are so very far away from the rest of civilization and they have decided they must be quite self-contained and progressive. They certainly have achieved their aim.

The climate, as on the Mediterranean, is warm in summer and not very cold in the winter. I was there during their season and found it most agreeably warm, quite fogless, and without any climatic disadvantages. However, when one leaves Sydney or Melbourne and contemplates journeying from, say, South to West Australia, things assume a different character and one realizes the significance of the word *dry*, for the vast, empty, and practically uninhabited expanse from the South, via the Middle, to the West is impossible from the white man's point of view. He can't stand that awful dryness and the intense tropical heat. Consequently, the comparatively small population of this great country is concentrated into a handful of beautiful cities, beyond which there is practically nothing but an endless stretch of Bush and dry, sandy wastes.

To show how astute and progressive they are in

Sydney, I would mention that as soon as my ship berthed, newspaper reporters awaited me at my bathroom door at 7 a.m., and I remember wondering what some of the journalists at home would think of it !

As we entered the bay I was awed by the dramatic effect of the marvellous bridge which straddles the harbour in one colossal span, which claims to be the finest in the world, and rightly so. It has a span of 1650 feet, is 160 feet wide, and contains 52,300 tons of steelwork ; it is constructed to carry four lines of electric railway traffic, six lines of vehicular traffic, and two pathways, and it took six years to construct. Its capacity is 138 trains, 6000 road vehicles, and 40,000 pedestrians an hour, and, inclusive of the approaches, the total length of the bridge is  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles. No wonder it has been described as “ the engineering wonder of the age ! ” Wherever I went afterwards this bridge predominated, for its size is so colossal that it can be seen for miles outside Sydney, and it has a way of looming over the tops of the buildings and leaning round distant corners which implants its giant shape in one’s mind for ever.

I was surprised to see such well-regulated traffic and so many people in Sydney, for I had somehow visualized the population as being spread over vast areas. From my hotel balcony, which was on the seventh floor, I had a magnificent view of the bay and the winding terraces of houses, the gardens of many of the larger ones running down almost to the water’s edge. Soon I became conscious of the

strong American element in Sydney, which was specially marked in the speech of the lift attendants and such people, who spoke with a strong American twang—probably due to the influence of films.

Another thing that impressed me was that the people worked hard and played hard, for no sooner had they finished their work than they were out either yachting or else bathing in one of the innumerable little bays of white sand, and at week-ends the entire population appeared to be revelling in the water, bathing, yachting, rowing, and racing, for within easy reach of everybody are Australia's 12,000 miles of the finest white beaches in the world, and during the summer it is usual to see them crowded day and night. In and out of the waves they plunge, riding the breakers in expert fashion—surf bathing being one of their most popular pastimes.

Members of the Surf Life Saving Clubs are perfect specimens of physical fitness in both sexes, and they perform an excellent service in safeguarding the less accomplished swimmers, for a great deal of attention is paid to saving the public by these well-organized clubs of life-savers, whose efficiency in the work of rescue and resuscitation is maintained by regular practice and inter-club competitions. Each person has to pass a severe swimming test before membership, and thereafter is vigorously trained. All the clubs along the coast of New South Wales are affiliated in the Surf Life Association of Australia, which is claimed

to be the most highly efficient voluntary organization in the world.

Sydney provides every form of modern amusement—palatial cinemas, good theatres, art galleries, and a multitude of pleasure parks. There are probably more field naturalists in Sydney than the whole of London, for where can one find, in England's capital, a Field Naturalists' Club that camps out every week-end, studying and photographing wild life? Of course, one needs to remember that the climates are totally different, for Australia's perpetual sunshine, which varies from the mild warmth reminiscent of an Italian autumn, to the sultry windless heat of the tropics, is far more suitable for outdoor activities than England's variable cold, damp climate, which changes from day to day, explaining the preference for indoor pursuits.

On the second day I was in Sydney I accepted an invitation to take luncheon with the Trustees of the Taronga Zoological Park, a wonderful zoo owned by the State. Prior to crossing the bay in a ferry I was met at the pier by Mr. Bassett Hull and Mr. T. C. Roughley, both keenly interested in the world of Nature, and anxious to show me the fine lay-out of the zoo. The boat was soon crowded, mostly with children accompanied by their parents, and as I looked at their little eager faces and listened to snatches of their excited conversation, I realized what a great part natural history played in the lives of Australia's rising generation.

As we proceeded across the harbour and down

the bay we passed many big liners arriving from abroad, slowly steaming along, whilst countless small yachts flitted around them like butterflies over a lake. We passed the island where several men-of-war were anchored, and beyond, the famous bridge towered above the whole scene. Within a hundred yards of the landing stage we passed through the lower entrance of the zoo, from which one climbs, by easy stages, through the most interesting aquarium I have ever seen, which cost about thirty-five thousand pounds to build. Incidentally, I believe the one in the London Zoo cost as much as fifty thousand pounds, but a comparison between the two is not possible, for many difficulties had to be overcome in London, whereas in Sydney the water is close by the aquarium, and had only to be pumped up about 150 feet.

I was especially fascinated by one tank containing a number of different creatures, amongst which were a big shark about seven feet long, a carpet shark, and several other varieties of fish varying in length from two inches to two feet, and it was very surprising to see several miniature penguins amongst them, for sharks often devour these birds. The keeper informed me that the sharks had never touched any of the creatures with them in the tank, and only ate what was given them. I stood watching for quite a long time, the smaller fish swimming under and over the big sharks, in the most friendly way, which offered yet another example of how creatures in captivity



often act differently than when in their wild state.

We then climbed a great number of steps, through a tunnel and arrived at the next section, where I saw the most beautiful coloured fish in the world, some having been brought from the Great Barrier Reef. The pictorial effect of these dainty creatures, forever gliding through the water, made an aquatic ballet that seemed to demand the most lovely music to complete the effect.

Leaving the aquarium I had my first glimpse of the Koalo bear, a number of which were lolling about in the trees, apparently asleep. Actually, I was standing by two old tree trunks and became engrossed watching them when suddenly, just above my head, a jazz band started playing very loudly. I was naturally very astonished, as no musicians were in sight. I was then informed that the music came from the trees, which, although extremely realistic in appearance, were merely imitation, made by men employed in the Zoo, and contained loud speakers through which an orchestra playing elsewhere was relayed and amplified.

After luncheon, which was presided over by the Chairman, Colonel Spain, and given by the Trustees who, incidentally, are voluntarily responsible to the Government for the management of the Zoo, we visited a huge cage containing a fully grown chimpanzee, which was resting on a shelf in the shade, for it was then the hottest time of the day. Down where we stood I could not see the animal very clearly, and asked if they could persuade it to

come down to the front of the cage, so that I could make its acquaintance.

The keeper said, "No, it's too hot now," and so I jokingly replied, "Well, can I bring it down for you?" and everybody laughed, thinking this would be impossible, especially in view of the keeper's statement. I then spoke a little chimpanzee language, and the effect on the huge creature was remarkable, for it sprang up, climbed down from the shelf, and came lumbering forward, right up to the bars, to have a look at me. And then it started to shout with joy, running round and round, whilst it clapped and stamped its feet on the hard concrete, until finally it was out of breath. My reputation with that keeper went up ninety per cent !

I was greatly struck with the general lay-out of the Zoo, which was planned both scientifically and artistically. Many of the cages were let into the hillside, rather on the lines of the Edinburgh Zoo, only here, of course, they had the advantage of tropical foliage. Sitting on the terrace was delightful, for apart from the grandeur of the Zoo's settings, one obtained a most wonderful view over the city, and this panorama, mingling with glimpses of natural bush preserved in the Zoological Gardens, created a magnificent effect—the picture enhanced by the beautiful wild birds flying about in their natural surroundings.

It is indeed fortunate for the future generations of this growing country that Sydney possesses such a progressive body of men to rule over the destinies

of Taronga Park, and there can be no doubt that their foresight in securing such a unique position will be inestimable in the years to come.

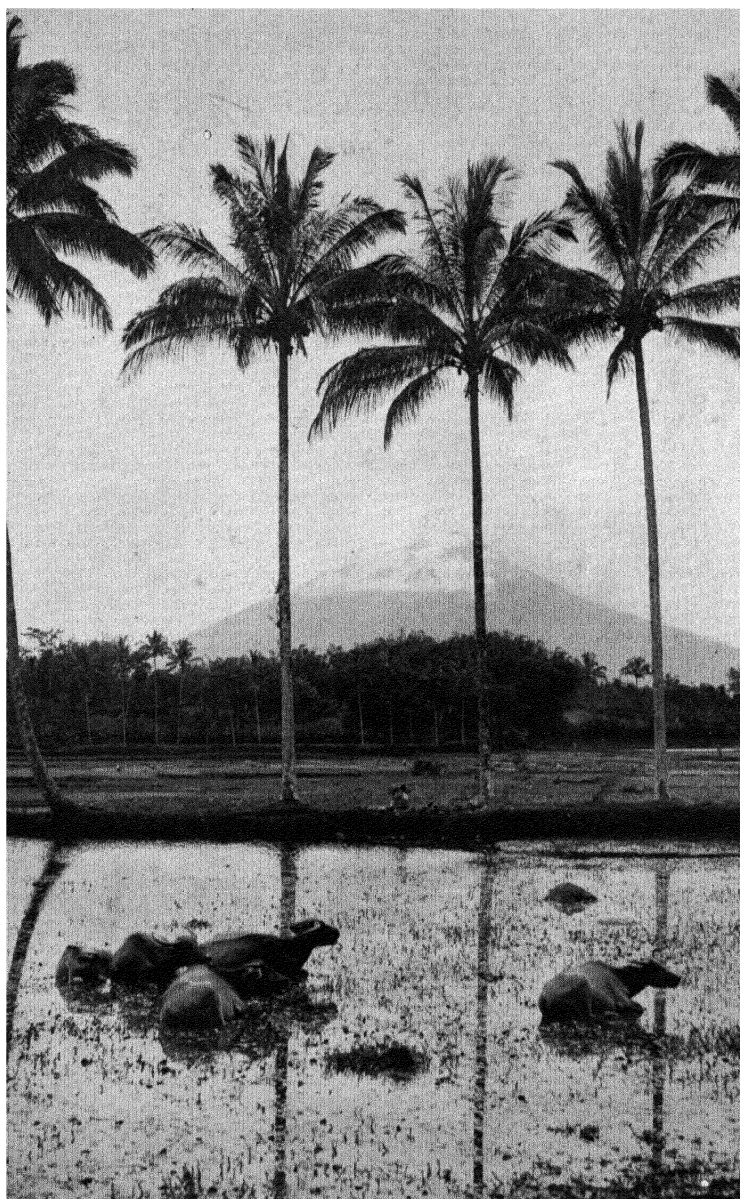
That evening we were entertained by members of the Royal Zoological Society, and several Fellows exhibited some extremely interesting films and lantern slides of bird life, including egrets, lyre-birds, and bower-birds. The films were accompanied by running commentaries recorded by the owners themselves, and the subjects were so interesting that I felt I had missed a great deal by not having visited Australia earlier. The function ended on a very happy note, for many copies of my books were handed round to the members, and reference was made to the fact that a number had been published by my brother and me as far back as 1890. As the chairman pointed out, I was an old friend of some forty years' standing, but it was more than gratifying to know my work was so appreciated thousands of miles away from home.

In Sydney there is a private broadcasting corporation for advertising purposes in addition to the one controlled by the State, and it was from the latter that I gave several talks. The management and the staff were extremely efficient. My Australian broadcasts were among my happiest experiences, and I recall particularly the first talk I gave soon after my arrival, for as I sat before the microphone it was difficult for me to imagine I was thousands of miles away from London.

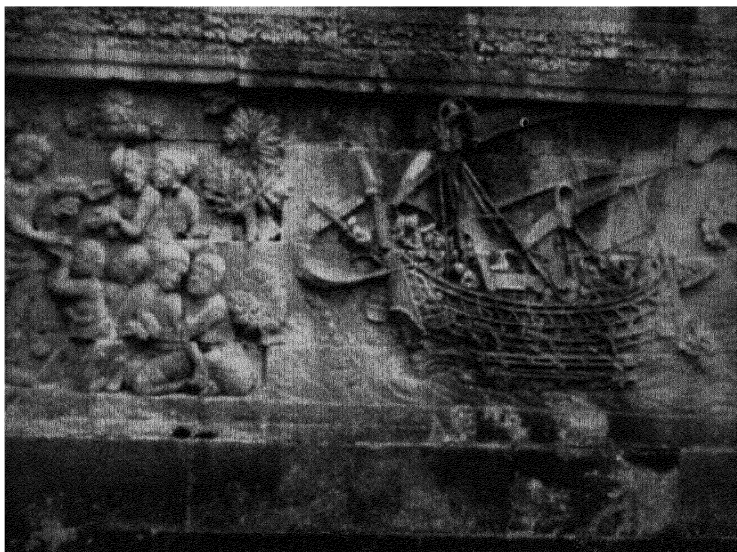
As I had already been attacked by armies of

autograph hunters whenever I left hotels and buildings, I was determined to escape from the broadcasting station without being noticed. My wife preceded me into the almost deserted side-street, hailed a taxi, and in we jumped. I heaved a deep sigh of relief, sank back into my seat, and I failed to notice the driver peering at me intently, but my wife had, although she said nothing. And so we whirled away to our hotel at a terrific speed.

Presently the driver, a cheerful and rather reckless fellow, turned round and said : " Excuse me, sir, but are you by any chance the *great* explorer who is visiting Sydney ? " I replied that I was certainly an explorer, although I was not sure about being *great*. This excited him, and he drove perilously along, trying to see where he was going and also to look at me simultaneously ! Jerking his head round again he said : " Then you must be Mr. *Cheery* Kearton—the owner of Mary ! " " Yes," I replied, " I am cheery, and I'm also Cherry Kearton—but how did you know about Mary, my chimpanzee ? " " Why, sir, my kiddies have got your books about her life. Blimey, to think I should actually be driving the owner of Mary to . . . !!! " At this point there was a loud bang, and my wife and I were hurled forward. " Good gracious ! " she cried. " What's happened ? " " It's all right, ma'am," answered our daring driver, quite unperturbed, " I only hit the kerb—I-I didn't notice it—but to think I should have the honour of driving *Cherry* Kearton—*Marv's* owner—gosh.



BUFFALO IN THE RICE-FIELDS OF JAVA



TWO OF THE MANY EXAMPLES OF STONE CARVING,  
BOROBUDUR TEMPLE, JAVA

NOTE.—There are nearly two miles of these relief carvings in the temple and date back to the eighth century of the Christian Era.

when I tell the kiddies they won't be able to sleep for weeks ! ”

I am afraid I was not feeling half so elated as he, and I was truly thankful when we ultimately reached my hotel in safety. As we alighted he asked me if I would do him a great favour, and I said I would be delighted to do anything within reason. Thus encouraged, he asked if I would be generous enough to shake hands with him ! Laughingly, I agreed, and as he bid us good night, he said it was a moment he would never forget. After that he drove furiously away to tell his wife and kiddies all about it, but how many kerbs he smashed into on the way, or how many pedestrians he scared, I shall never know.

After another of my broadcasts I realised the great popularity of wireless in Australia, and of the keen interest taken in natural history, for I received countless letters, and offers of gifts of pets, both large and small, to an embarrassing degree.

I shall never forget one morning a package arrived by post, and my wife, anxious to see its contents, did not notice a slip of paper fall out as she unwrapped it. Luckily I did, for it read, “ Dangerous Spider. Open Carefully.” This pleasing gift was from a lad, nine years of age, who thought I would like to have a live specimen, and he followed this generosity with a letter asking me if it were a trap-door spider ! It certainly was, and alive too !

I received another letter from a young lady teacher who had two thorny devils, or molochs, and wished to know if she might bring them along

to me. As she resided in the suburbs I thought it would be easier if I called at her home to see them. They proved to be extremely ugly little chaps, all spikes and quite fearsome, but there was nothing of the devil about them, for they were perfect pets, and obviously gave considerable pleasure to their owner. Their sleeping quarters were in an oblong cardboard box—a little bed at each end, complete with pillows, and each moloch had two coloured blankets for cold nights ! The strange thing was that they each slept in their own beds and seemed to know them. Instead of being served with early tea they were fed on ants, which provided a truly remarkable sight, for as the ants marched along the molochs picked out every third one in order that the line should not be broken up. I learnt that in one day each moloch would consume over a thousand ants. Their owner told me that whenever she went for a picnic—which is a very common pastime in Australia—she always took her little molochs with her, to give them an outing, and she usually found a colony of ants for them to eat. Some people have strange ideas of good companions, but I think that there are very few who grow to love thorny devils, although I admit they have *many points* in their favour.

Another letter was from a little girl of eight who wished to know if I would accept two of her pets in exchange for a chimpanzee like my Mary, when I came back to Australia again, as she thought it would make such a jolly playmate. I received quite as many letters from children as from adults,



and came to the conclusion that in most instances the youngsters were as well informed as their elders in natural history, which showed the great progress made in modern education. I am a great believer in training the minds of the young to be kind to animals, and I am certain there will be far less cruelty in the future if this is done throughout the world.

My broadcasts were invariably followed by some unique experience, such as the one when a gentleman was ushered in to see me, and invited me to go for an aeroplane flight on the following day with half a dozen aborigines who were taking part in a film that was being produced. I accepted, and as the aerodrome was some distance out of Sydney a car was placed at my disposal. I found it quite modern, and a fine machine awaited me, which I was told had been built in Australia. I reproduce a picture of those natives, who were very impressed with their uncanny experience of flying like birds in the sky. One of them shut his eyes throughout the whole flight, which reminded me of a major I met during the war in East Africa who was always pestering my commander to let him go up for a "flip," as it was called. His request was ultimately granted, and he whispered to me as he was getting into the plane, "Kearton, I am scared stiff, but I want to be able to say I've been up!" When the machine landed close to where I was standing I noticed the major had his head down, but on hearing my voice he looked up, and realizing that he had reached terra firma again his first words were: "I've kept

my eyes shut ever since we started, but I *can* tell my pals I've been up all the same ! ”

As in most modern cities to-day broadcasting shares honours with talking pictures, and Sydney can boast of a great many very palatial cinemas. My interest in films led me to note some statistics in the New South Wales Government Gazette, from which I learnt that in one year, out of 475 registered films, 3 were Australian, 18 British, and the remainder American ! This, in my opinion, is not the fault of the Australian film-goer, but is due to the fact that the exhibitors show what they like ; it is a position sadly in need of a remedy.

Incidentally, on my return to England I was rather surprised to find one of these Australian exhibitors being lavishly entertained, and listened to with admiration when he declared that he was making a feature of British films ! I am afraid that most of us do not realize that America is very much nearer to Australia than England is, and that endless coils of films from Hollywood are linking the countries even closer.

Social clubs abound out there expressing the hospitable nature of the Australian, and one is always being invited to luncheons at which addresses are eagerly listened to. Some of the big business houses adopt this pleasant idea, inviting the staff to enjoy itself, but such luncheons never interfere with business ; in fact, they increase efficiency.

My wife accepted an invitation to a luncheon at the Writers' Club, and insisted on my accompanying her, but she did not divulge that membership

was confined to the fair sex ! This I discovered, to my embarrassment, whilst being introduced to one lady after another, the room being crowded. My eyes kept wandering to the door, hoping to see one of my own sex appear, but alas, there was no such luck, and I realized I was to be a lone man surrounded by forty talented and very charming ladies ! Well, I have wandered through the darkest forest and faced death a hundred times in the wild, but I was never so afraid as at that luncheon where there was no danger at all !

The Union Club is the oldest, and I was made a member of it during my stay. It stands in its estate in the heart of the town, and consequently the ground alone is worth thousands of pounds. Many interesting personalities belong to it, including a retired judge, who is over eighty years of age, who talked most entertainingly of the early pioneer days, and his tales were so fascinating that I felt I was listening to Wild West stories of America. In contrast to this fine old veteran, many of the members were business men, whose conversation about England, the war in Abyssinia, and political problems made me think I was in a London club, so well informed were they of current affairs at home and abroad.

But throughout my stay in the city I felt the country calling me, and I wanted to see the animals, birds, and insects of the wilds, so that when it was suggested by the Royal Zoological Society that I should spend a week-end in the National Park I welcomed the idea with delight. Now, within easy

reach of Sydney, there are two great national parks, each over thirty-five thousand acres in extent, embracing large stretches of virgin forest land, and it is pleasing to record that both are reserved as sanctuaries for animal, bird, and plant life.

It was a crystal-clear day when Mr. John Ramsay called for my wife and me in his car, and as we drove through the various shopping centres Mr. Neville Cayley, the famous bird artist, proved himself to be an expert shopper by the way he went about purchasing all kinds of provisions for our outing. Indeed, the stock of provisions grew to such an alarming extent that I began to wonder where it was going to be packed in the car ; however, thanks to his genius we were all soon comfortably arranged, and away we went. Passing by the side of Botany Bay a crude notice caught my eye stating " FINE PRAWNS FOR SALE." " By Jove ! those would be a treat," I said. Quickly pulling up the car Neville Cayley jumped out, and in a few moments returned with four pounds of prawns, a purchase that relates to an incident which happened later.

After leaving the main road and turning down a woodland track we reached our destination, hidden away in a charming little valley, through which a stream wound its way. Here we found a wooden cabin, possessing a wide verandah, at which we were to stay for our brief sojourn. It was too late to do any photography, and so we went for a stroll, and I was shown two bower-birds' playhouses within two hundred yards, one being in very good condition, which meant that the bird was still using it.

My kind hosts suggested we should start immediately to build a hide-up nearby, into which I could creep in the early hours of the morning, for, at that time of the year, the bird was almost sure to visit its playhouse early, and so this we did.

At dusk we returned to the cabin and enjoyed ourselves immensely, for it was a very lively party, and, although there were two or three ladies present, including my wife, the men did the cooking in true Australian fashion—that is, chops were cooked on the grid-iron. The conversation was chiefly concerned with natural history, interspersed with humorous anecdotes and adventures, and many diverse tales of animal and bird life in that vast region were told. How young everybody seemed to be out there! Maybe this is due to their keen interest in everything, and their unbounding enthusiasm for natural history.

Later in the evening we were interrupted by the hooting of a motor car, and in a few seconds Dr. Marshall, one of the members who had been detained in town, entered the cabin, and in a breezy way held up a big parcel and said: “Boys, I’ve got a real treat for you—PRAWNS!” We all laughed heartily!

Late that night I sat contemplating alone, marveling at the beautiful natural scenery I had encountered. Here I was in virgin country, amongst animals and birds I had never before photographed, and I lamented the fact that time, and opportunity, had not enabled me to make, as Gould had done, a stay of two years in such a paradise of Nature.

I am accustomed to rising early, especially when there is any photography to be done, and so before daybreak I was fully awake and dressed, although the rest of the party still slept. I crept out and round to the back of one of the motor cars, and there gave one of my best imitations of a lion roaring. Two of the guests nearest me, who were sleeping on the verandah, woke up and sat up simultaneously—possibly they had been dreaming about my stories of Africa ! Anyhow, having discovered the “lion,” they lost their fear and, unable to resist the charm of the early morning and the sight of me fully dressed, they rose.

Soon after we were on our way to the bower-birds' playhouse, and during our walk three trapdoor spiders' homes on the top of a small bank were pointed out to me. Anxious to examine the construction of one I approached it, and was warned about the poisonous bite of the spider. Strangely enough, three days afterwards the newspapers contained reports of two people who were in hospital seriously ill as the result of being bitten by these spiders. Creeping into the hide we had made the previous day I fixed up my camera, and after completely covering me my friends left me, arranging to return in three hours.

My observations, as I sat peeping through the little opening, filled me with admiration for the workmanship of the bower-bird. His home was a wonderful piece of bird construction, utterly different from anything I had ever seen, and, as an example of architecture in the feathered world,

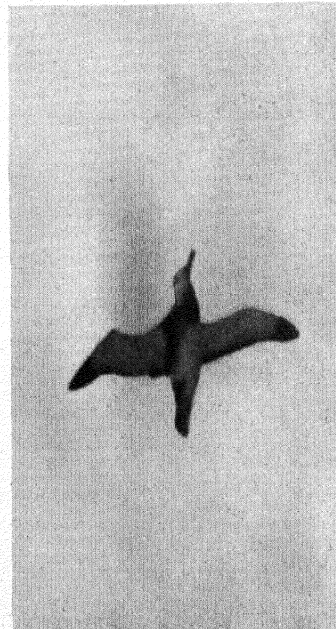
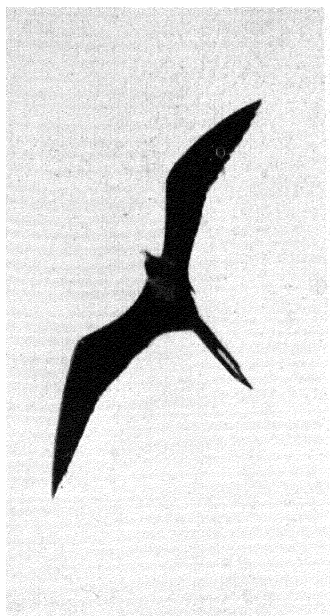
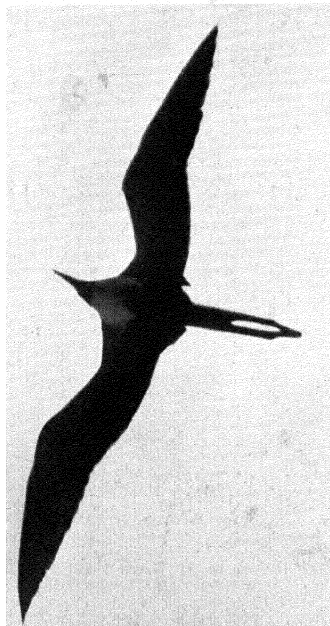


THE BOWER-BIRD, SKILLED BUILDER, PAINTER AND DECORATOR

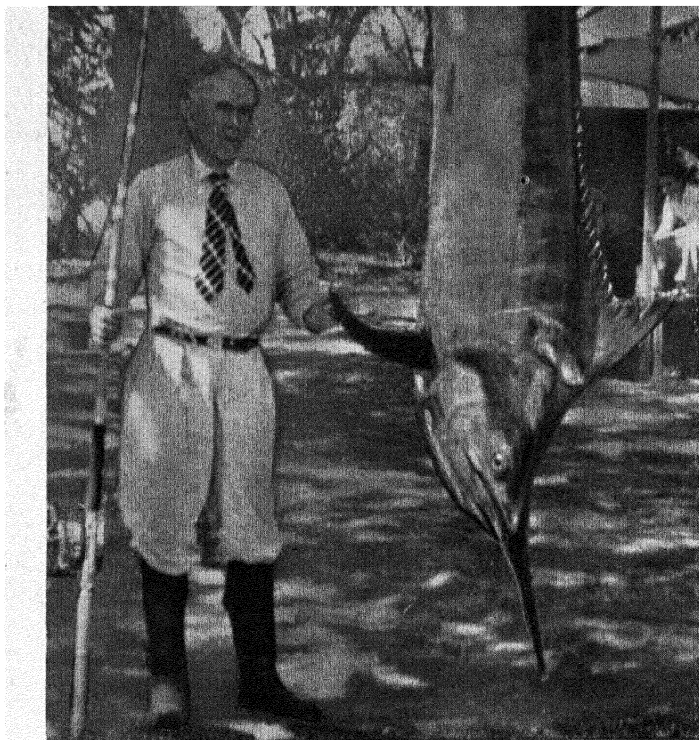


THE HAUNT OF THE KINGFISHER IN THE NATIONAL PARK, NEAR SYDNEY





SÉA STUDIES—FRIGATE BIRD AND ALBATROSS



(Above) ZANE GREY WITH HIS CATCH  
(Below) A SEA OF REFLECTIONS

probably has no equal. It was neither a nest nor shelter, having been laboriously erected entirely for amusement. The sides were a foot long and a foot high, set five or six inches apart, and composed chiefly of upright sticks wedged in the ground and often forming an arch overhead. Inside they were concave at the base, leaving a rounded space, and this particular bower, like the majority, was built in a north and south direction.

Whilst waiting there patiently I was struck by the beautiful notes of the birds all around me, for I had always shared the general impression that Australian birds had no song. My vigil was also enlivened by two delightful blue fairy wrens which were trying to discover exactly what kind of a creature I was concealed in so strange a hide-up of loose branches and green cloth. They peeped, chattered, and hopped to and fro, but their inquisitive natures could gain no satisfaction, and they ultimately flew away, very puzzled.

At that moment I happened to look up, and saw, about seven feet away, a beady eye shining. This, I found, belonged to an opossum, peeping out of its nest. At first I thought this little fellow might be a flying squirrel, and as I looked at its little face, my mind went back to a similar scene, under less happy circumstances, which occurred during the late war in Tanganyika, in Africa, near to the Portuguese border. My battalion had marched forward from a bush encampment and I was left to wait for a car coming from the coast to take me to rejoin the flying corps. Soon after they had left,

shells began to arrive from a German Konigsberg gun, in the belief that our people were still there. Altogether they sent about twenty shells, and their firing was so accurate that I quickly took refuge in a narrow little trench, close to a thick bush. Looking across the partly cleared space where there were one or two big trees left, I was surprised to see a flying fox making a gliding journey through the air towards me. The bursting shells had upset its nerves, and the next thing I saw was its face peeping out of the bush at me.

I was not afraid of the opossum, but when I chanced to look below, I received a severe shock, for there were four land leeches, two of which were making a meal off my legs. Now, I am not at all afraid of lions or tigers, but I have a perfect horror of land leeches, for they go about their jobs so uncannily and leave me not only bloodless, but stone cold. They are almost black, and very similar to our family of looper caterpillars, so-called on account of the way they progress by looping their bodies so that front and back legs come together, and then the forepart moves out till the body is straight, followed by the necessary loop to bring the back legs forward again.

My pet aversion is the land leech, for it sees one from afar, and, as one brushes past, drops from a leaf, whilst on the ground it approaches silently. However, worst of all is the fact that it is so clever, it does not let its presence be felt until it has filled itself full of one's blood.

On one occasion, while cutting my way through

a dense patch of jungle in Borneo and advancing at the rate of some six miles a day, I was foolish enough to try and make a short cut, and my porters and I were so mercilessly attacked by these creatures that we were bleeding from our shoulders to our feet. They even got into my boots, through the boot-lace holes. I shall never forget the relief when I emerged from that jungle and struck the river again. I have often expressed a wish that I would like to visit New Guinea, but, when I discovered they had land leeches there, my interest quickly waned.

The time passed very quickly in my hide-up, and it was with great regret that I heard the footsteps of my friends coming for me, especially as I had to admit that the bower-bird had not made its appearance. I was terribly disappointed. However, at a later date I was able to watch and study another in its playhouse, and it was very amusing to see the bird running in and out of the bower, pulling out sticks, and placing them in other positions.

The bower-bird is a beautiful creature, with a deep glossy blue-black plumage, lovely sapphire blue eyes, and a yellow-tipped beak, which stands out clearly against his dark colouring. The female has a yellowish green head and back, with wings and tail of a dark yellowish brown. Their bowers are treated entirely as a playground and repaired at intervals. But the bower-bird is not only a builder, but also a most talented decorator and painter, and decorates its playground in front of

the bower with a most artistic collection of snail snells, berries, leaves, and bits of blue paper—it has a weakness for blues and greens. The sticks of the bower are painted with powdered charcoal, mixed with saliva, the paint having been made by grinding charred wood in its bill and then applied by using its beak as a painter's brush.

These bowers last for several years and are renovated in the spring. I wondered what could have been the origin of this building habit, as it appears that the female is hardly ever present ; also it is used long before mating time, so that it is really a man's playground, though why it should want to play alone puzzles me to this day.

The bower-bird, like the lyre-bird, is also a mimic, and can reproduce the notes of many of the birds living around it. Its food consists mainly of wild fruits, berries, and insects, so that in the orchard he might be useful in keeping off pests, although it becomes one itself since it has developed a liking for the cultivated fruit.

There are at least eight different kinds of bower-birds, and what is more, an unlimited number of decorative schemes for embellishing the exteriors of their playhouses. Snail shells seem to be in the majority, but blue feathers from the parrot, scraps of blue paper, broken china, and many bright articles, such as silver coins, spectacles, empty cartridge cases, and even watches, have been found in front of bowers. Blue and purple flowers, picked out of a garden a mile away, are no uncommon sight. It was not believed that the satin bower-bird

was an artist until Norman Chaffer filmed one in the National Park whilst it was actually applying paint to its bower. This was one of the very interesting films which was screened on the night I have mentioned at the Zoological Society.

Incidentally, I was told that the architecture of some of the other species is not up to the standard of the satin bower-bird, but irrespective of this there is not, in the whole range of ornithology, a record of any other bird that builds a house for pure amusement, decorating it with brilliant objects, and painting it as well. Nowhere in the world have I met any savage who is half as advanced as this bird, and even if he were he would want the woman to do the work ! Is it not interesting that a bird should have anticipated man in the building of a dance hall ?

It occurred to me as I wandered through the valley that there is no subject so fascinating as birds, for all around me were parrots, parrakeets, laughing jacks, and innumerable species unknown to me, that were displaying their bright colours in the trees and uttering beautiful notes. The appeal which birds make is universal, and the countless details of their habits and the many drawings and illustrations obtainable are an endless source of interest to young and old.

As I came into the open by a little stream, I saw Mr. Chaffer and Mr. Ramsay busily taking photographs of a kingfisher going into its home in the river bank, to feed its young. They were using a very small camera, which was easily con-

cealed close to the nesting hole, and commanded a good view as the bird alighted on a twig just by the entrance. By an ingenious bit of mechanism, invented by Mr. Ramsay, they were taking photographs simply by pulling two long thin pieces of twine—one to release the shutter and the other to wind the film off. The sight of these two men, sitting comfortably in the open, only thirty yards away from their subject, reminded me of many years ago when I took my first picture of a kingfisher whilst it was catching fish in an old Surrey garden. It was winter and snow covered the ground ; I was lying concealed behind an old door, and was using thirty feet of rubber tubing to fire off the shutter—the picture before me was strangely similar.

I then sat down on a partly submerged tree which had fallen into the river, and was joined by another member of our party—Mr. Michael Sharland.

All Nature seemed to be arrayed in the gayest of colours as the kingfisher, which was about the size of the English variety, came flying down to the pool. Just then I happened to look down and saw a little lizard gazing up at me very interestedly, and it was not at all frightened when I pointed my reflex camera at it, barely two feet away, and even when I moved past it made no attempt to take its departure.

On the way back we drove through some truly wonderful scenery, and I was surprised and delighted to find such excellent roads. At almost every turn the character of the scenery changed.



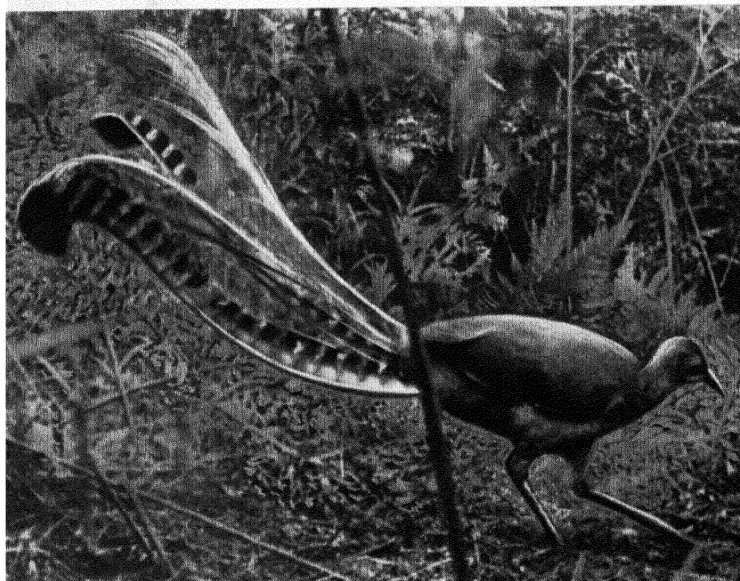
At one time we were amongst giant trees which had been saved from the wood-cutter, with graceful ferns in the undergrowth, and then we emerged on to a rocky expanse overlooking endless country ; presently we dropped into a valley, winding by the side of a beautiful river.

On a motor ride such as that the change of scenery was a constant delight, and I was indeed sorry when it all ended, and we turned our faces towards Sydney. Unfortunately, my friends had to resume their work on the following day, but I was fortunate in being able to rest on my balcony overlooking the beautiful harbour with its marvellous bridge, and dream about the beauties of that contrasting scenery for as long as I wished.





THE KOOKABURRA AND HIS GIRL FRIEND



FEMALE AND MALE LYRE-BIRDS

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## CHAPTER III

### *Homestead*

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## CHAPTER III

### HOMESTEAD

**T**HE true significance of Australia—land of sunshine and originality—of unique flora and fauna—slowly dawns on one when it is realized that it is twenty-five times larger than Great Britain and Ireland, and three-quarters of the size of the entire area of Europe. I was privileged to be a guest in several Australian homesteads, and so was able to contrast the living conditions in this new land, with its English ways, to those of countries I had seen.

Now I shall never forget the first homestead I visited, for it might have been in the heart of England. I remember waking very early in the morning and opening a glass-panelled door that led on to a wide verandah. Inhaling the wonderful pure air, I saw, away in the distance, the sun just rising. Stretching before me were fields of vivid green, upon which sheep and cattle were grazing, and gently rising hills crowned with trees completed the picture. I wandered through the garden that overflowed with gaily coloured flowers and mingling perfumes. It seemed to me that the soil was so rich and the climatic conditions so favourable that none of the difficulties confronting the gardener in England would be experienced in creating a veritable garden Paradise. It was at this beautiful place that I was first introduced to the bearded lizard.

Australia is a great country for reptiles, and although I had seen several species of lizards and

found them all different from any I had ever seen in other parts of the world, this was the first occasion I had come in contact with the bearded species. It was quite at home in the corner of a small square framed with tall tropical ferns and thick vegetation. Naturally I was anxious to get a photograph of it, but when I tried to induce it to move into a better light, it assumed a most menacing attitude, for its jaws opened wide and its spiky beard spread out in a most alarming manner. Having had no experience with this creature before, I was uncertain what to do, for I had never seen a lizard become so angry, and the remarkable thing was that as its fury increased so it changed its colour. Ultimately I left it without securing a single photograph. I was told he had lived there for a long time and although quite alone he seemed perfectly happy.

But the most spectacular of all the members of the lizard family is the frilled species, which was discovered one hundred years ago, for it can run in the most extraordinary manner on its hind legs. Nobody believed this for many years until Saville Kent, who made a special study of it, provided proof by photography, its comical appearance causing widespread amusement.

These remarkable creatures are to be found in Northern Australia, where they are by no means rare. The frill, which measures from eight to ten inches in diameter, reminds one of the Elizabethan ruff, and can be quickly opened and closed, and when fully spread hides the body from an attacker. The colour of the frill ranges from a diffused ver-



milion to yellow and blue. Strangely enough, the frill cannot be spread unless the lizard's mouth is opened to the full extent. When hunted it probably transforms itself from a harmless-looking lizard into a most frightening and dangerous-looking creature. Like the bearded lizard, this frilled gentleman uses the same sort of bluff, for in spite of its terrible appearance when angry, it seldom attempts to bite, but merely hisses in anger, although it sometimes delivers a blow with its tail, which has the sting of a whip.



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CHAPTER IV

*Sydney to Melbourne*

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## CHAPTER IV

### SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE

LEAVING Sydney by car we started on a circuitous route to Melbourne, about seven hundred miles away, that would carry us through some of the most beautiful scenery in Australia. It was a perfect day, the heat of the sun being tempered by a refreshing breeze, and the strangely lovely scenery of Australia, combining the fascination of the tropical jungle, with the austerity of the desert, and the formal dignity of the park. Before long we had risen several hundred feet, and there, stretched before us, lay what appeared to be a vast bush country. I was entranced by the variety of bird life everywhere, and the vivid colouring of our feathered friends, as they flitted in hundreds from tree to tree, giving the impression that the contents of a giant painted palette had been scattered over the forests—yellows, greens, blues, reds, merging and separating as in a kaleidoscope. Seeing so many species of parrots made my thoughts wander back several years, to the time when I was very ill, right in the heart of London, and my only outlook was upon brick walls. A friend had presented me with two budgerigars, and the joy those two little chaps gave me is indescribable, for I used to watch their fascinating ways for hours. They were of the original yellow and green species, and, in my opinion, much more beautiful than the cross-bred and altered specimens frequently seen—yet another example of man's endeavour to improve on Nature, in vain. Such a

view may upset the fancy breeder, for I am afraid money enters into these experiments a great deal, and people have made quite a small fortune out of birds which, by constant cross-breeding, have assumed the most fantastic colouring. Flying from tree to tree was the little bell-bird, making a noise loud enough to make one think he is four times his size. Kookaburras were also much in evidence, and a delight to listen to, but I noticed they were always at their best in the early morning. Often I would stop to hear the wonderful notes of Australia's songsters, which, of course, were strange to me, and I wondered how on earth the impression could have been circulated that the Australian birds did not sing. I would not go so far as to say that any of these birds could equal our English lark for purity of tone or the sheer joyous thrill of singing, but all the same, the many curious notes I listened to were a delight, and a wonder.

Another thing which pleased me was the extreme tameness of the birds, which gave me excellent opportunities to study them closely. When our driver turned off the main road, and down a side-track, we came upon a small shanty perched on the very edge of a high cliff. We alighted, and on approaching this unusual sight I noticed a number of iron rails round it, and on walking nearer, saw that a magnificent and awe-inspiring view of the coast lay before us, hundreds of feet below. Gazing down, I got quite a shock, for there, scattered about, were the remains of several motor-cars. I naturally thought of the great loss of life which these signified,

but, to my surprise, was told that not a single life had been lost and that the only sufferers had been the insurance companies !

Here, as elsewhere on the journey, we had the usual refreshing cup of tea in English fashion, but made more attractive by some wonderful scones which are a feature in Australia. At this time the newspapers were giving daily reports of the activities of the American novelist, Zane Grey, who had come all the way from Arizona to catch a record-sized sword-fish, and this news carried my memory away back to 1910, when, in New York, Zane Grey and I used to dine together in a little restaurant. He was a quiet, level-headed man, who took life very seriously, although he was bristling with vitality and had a keen sense of humour. I remember how his eyes would twinkle when relating his inimitable stories.

We had a great mutual friend in Buffalo Jones—the last of the plainsmen—who, at the age of seventy, went out with me to Central Africa in order to prove man's power over the beasts of the earth, simply by overcoming them with a piece of rope, for Jones in his day had been a great expert with the lasso and used to appear with Buffalo Bill. His idea was to rope elephant, rhino, buffalo, and lion, and in my book, *Wild Life Across the World*, I give the story of our experiences together.

By the way, Zane Grey, I think, wrote his first book on Buffalo Jones, which was entitled *The Last of the Plainsmen*. “ This is Bermangui, sir, and

Mr. Zane Grey's camp is away to the left, on that little rise." The driver's voice interrupted my dreams and brought me back to earth, and alighting, I started to walk up the incline towards my old friend's abode. What a delightful spot for a camp ! To the left the ocean stretched away for miles, with sunlight glittering on the calm waters, whilst practically hidden by clusters of shady trees stood his camp. I approached very quietly and saw, sitting in a chair talking to a young fellow, a man whom time had dealt with very kindly, for although his hair had become silvery and his face slightly furrowed, it was the same Zane Grey I knew years ago. He looked up, saw me, and with that wonderful smile of his, rose and extending his hand said : " Cherry Kearton ! Who on earth would have thought of seeing you here—but then you always do turn up in the most unexpected places. Delighted to see you, you haven't changed a bit."

We sat and chatted for a long time, and I thought how marvellous it was for a man of his age to be able to play a mighty fish weighing about 450 pounds for five hours at a stretch, and how his strength could possibly last out ! I voiced this thought, and smilingly he said : " Come along and be photographed with my last catch this morning." Following him I saw hanging on to a branch a fine sword-fish about 10 feet long. A photograph was taken of us, but the result compels me to make a confession. I had forgotten to turn the spool in my camera, so that the picture was superimposed



on the preceding one I had taken just before reaching Zane Grey's camp.

I was particularly sorry it had occurred with so interesting a picture, but fortunately I made up for it, for I filmed him beside the giant fish from several angles. Up to that time he had not caught a record-sized sword-fish, but he was determined to do so. As we were saying good-bye, he said: "Don't forget on your way home if you go through America, to call and see my wife in Arizona, who will be more than delighted to see you both."

Journeying onwards, I was constantly struck by the contrasting changes in the scenery, and I was greatly impressed to see the amount of energy which had been spent in clearing thousands of trees from the land to make it suitable for farming. Just before arriving at a charming seaside place called Eden, I was shown some extensive oyster-beds, and told that eight thousand bags were shipped annually to Sydney. I tasted some and found them of very delicate flavour. Incidentally, Australia has an advantage over this country, for oysters are in season all the year round there, so that one does not have to stop and reflect whether there is an "R" in the month before indulging in a dozen!

It was unfortunate for the early development of Australia that the weather on that momentous day in April, 1770, when Captain Cook first sighted the eastern coast of Australia at Cape Everard in Victoria, was so bad, for it forced

him to pass Twofold Bay. Had it been fine, he would have sighted and explored this truly wonderful harbour. As the name indicates, Twofold Bay consists of two bays, shaped rather like the letter "W," and the scenery around them is magnificent. In the background the huge pyramid of Mount Imlay rises to a height of 3000 feet, whilst before it stretches serried ranges of wooded hills, which gradually decrease in altitude down to the shore.

In Eden I met a most interesting personality, Mr. J. C. Logan, one of the real type of pioneers, full of energy and greatly interested in everything progressive, and I believe that Eden owes a great deal to his initiative and energy. He told me many fascinating stories of the pioneering days and showed me his museum, which contains the skeleton of "Old Tom," a famous "killer" whale, the history of which he recounted.

"Old Tom" was easily recognized by a kind of wart or growth on his fin. He was last seen alive close under the Eden lighthouse on September 15th, 1930, and he was towed off the rocks in Cattle Bay two days later to the Try Works, at the mouth of the Kiah River, where the skeleton was cleaned prior to being erected in Eden.

An old stager who had known "Old Tom" all his life—eighty-one years—found out from talks with the natives that the killer whales had frequented Twofold Bay for a hundred and twenty years, and that the mob of killers, in those early days, would bring a whale into the Bay, when the natives would go out in their bark canoes, numbering about

sixty, and kill it with spears with the assistance of the killers. Then the natives would cut out the flesh off the throat of the whale, and eat it, leaving the remainder for the killers. This went on till the white man appeared on the scene and started killing whales in boats. This was in 1843, when Benjamin Boyd, who later came to a tragic end in a fight with natives, founded a whaling station in Eden.

At this time there were about thirty killers in the mob, and they stopped at a haunt known as the Leather Jacket, forming a line out to the east extending about four miles, and intercepted all the whales as they went north each year to give birth to their young, during June, returning south again in November, when the killers again caught them together with their calves. As time went on the killers realised that man sought the whales, and that in helping him to kill them they secured food for themselves, and so when they caught a passing whale, one of their number went to the whaling station and attracted the attention of the men by throwing itself out of the water and flop-tailing, that is, bringing its tail down on the water with the sound of a gun. The men then would launch their boat and follow the killer, which would swim just in front and guide them out to where the other killers were holding up the whale by forming a half-circle round it. The men would then harpoon and kill the whale with the help of the killers. A friend of mine has seen them drive a whale into Ross Bay, and watched "Old Tom"

leave his confederates in charge and swim three miles to the whaling station to call the men, and swim ahead of them back to Ross Bay, where the whale was shut in most scientifically by the team of monsters. On one occasion the headsman was knocked out of the boat by the harpoon rope and when he came to the surface there was a killer beside him and he thought his end had come, but that killer just swam round, and dived under him, emerging on the other side until the whaleboat cut adrift of the whale and returned and took him aboard. The killer then left him and went off in pursuit of the whale. Now why that killer remained with the man in the water, unless to protect him from the sharks, nobody knows, but that is what took place, and it is generally believed the killer knew the man's worth and would do him no harm under any circumstances.

Once, when a black whale had been killed and a storm seemed imminent, the whaler asked my friend to tow the whale into the bay for safety, and there were only two killers there at the time, "Old Tom" and "Hooky," so-called on account of his dorsal fin being bent over. Now the black whale floats when killed, although the others sink, and as it was made fast to the boat with a four-inch Coir rope, the towing began, but "Old Tom" and "Hooky" objected, and took the whale down below the surface. However, the launch was too strong for them and up came the whale. The killers repeated this performance five times and each time the launch pulled the whale up to the top.

Finally "Old Tom" could not stand the situation, for he keenly desired the tongue of the victim and so he swam round it and managed to place himself between the launch and the whale, put his fin or flapper over the rope, and dived swiftly down, hoping to break it, but in vain, and so he went back to the head of the whale and had another tug, but without success. He then swam close up to the stern of the launch, gripped the rope in his mouth, and bit it clean through. The launch backed up to the whale again and made it fast, but before reaching the Try Works, "Old Tom" had secured the tongue !

Around 1891, killers worked in mobs of about twelve, and prior to that were seen in groups containing as many as thirty, but they have died out. Only once was a calf seen with a mob and it became tangled up in the anchor rope and drowned. The men cut it clear and the mother never left it for three days, taking it out to sea with her, only to see it washed ashore again, and she finally left it when decomposition set in.

The killer whale has been described as the terror of the ocean, and even the big sperm whale and the Greenland whale are in deadly fear of it, whilst porpoises and smaller creatures have actually been known to run ashore from it. Its fierceness and fighting qualities are deadly, and in size it ranges up to thirty feet long. Like a pack of hounds, a mob of them will attack and literally tear a big whale to pieces, and they have been known to seize one which has just been killed by whalers and

almost drag it under water, for some mysterious reason, their behaviour at various times being quite inexplicable.

I remember well my friend, the late Herbert Ponting, telling me of his great adventure with some killer whales whilst with Captain Scott on his last ill-fated expedition to the South Pole. Ponting said he had noticed some fine icebergs floating in the sea about a mile away and he was most anxious to photograph them. When he was about to cross the ice, eight killer whales appeared, blowing loudly, and then dived under the ice. Naturally, he was keen to secure a picture of them, and ran with his camera to the spot where he thought they would rise and got to within a few feet of the edge when, to his horror, it heaved up under his feet and split into fragments, and at the same time the eight killers burst from under the ice and spouted. Luckily the shock sent him backwards on to the ice instead of forwards into the sea, and the commotion made by the killers set the ice floe on which he was standing rocking furiously. Seeing his danger, he started jumping from floe to floe, when he realized the killers were actually chasing him, and making a horrible noise. He just managed to leap on to the main ice to safety, and on looking back saw their huge black heads rising out of the water with their mouths open wide, revealing their array of sinister teeth, just at the very spot he had just leapt across. What an escape !

The behaviour of some of these ocean monsters

is most curious, particularly the fourteen-foot Pelorus Jack, which was generally regarded as a shark, but which, I think, later was proved to be a dolphin. It is recorded that it used to pilot ships for over twenty years, and even a captain revisiting a certain place declared it was the same creature he had seen forty years before. It lived mostly around Pelorus Sound, and its habit was to meet the coastal steamers day and night that were on their way through the narrow and dangerous French Pass separating the South Island of New Zealand from Rangitoto, or D'Urville Island. So much interest was taken in Pelorus Jack that the New Zealand Government passed a special Proclamation to save it from being killed by either gun or harpoon. Hundreds of New Zealanders and visitors alike would make special trips from Wellington to see it ploughing along in front of the ship's bows, and for years it was a never-failing source of interest to all the passing ships. But killer whales—ugh, they cause a shiver to run down my spine every time I think of them !

A few days later I encountered a place where they were making brickettes, which reminded me of something very similar I had seen in Germany after the Armistice. Machinery was doing all the work, and man was conspicuous by his absence. Electricity dominated the scene, and a number of devil-diggers were at work scooping up material on a thirty foot depth and a quarter of a mile front. It was a dark substance with which the trucks were being filled, and sent on their way mechanically

to the factory, where it was turned into brickettes—a most uncanny sight !

Close by I stopped for luncheon at an hotel, and got into conversation with a man who appeared very interested in and conversant with the affairs of the State, remarking what a lot of good Mr. Lyons, the Prime Minister, had done for the country, whereupon I explained that it was through him I had come to see Australia. “How so ?” he asked, and upon the answer hangs a tale. One evening I was listening to the wireless at my London home when Mr. Lyons was announced, and gave a most interesting talk on Australia, which concluded by his inviting his listeners to visit this new and extremely progressive country, which explained why I was there. Just then my companion said, “There he is going upstairs !” Accordingly, I sent up my card, and was at once received very warmly and graciously by both Mr. and Mrs. Lyons. The Prime Minister, smiling broadly, said : “I have heard, Mr. Kearton, that I am responsible for your visit to this country !” “That is so,” I replied, “and I don’t regret it, for I am enjoying every moment of my stay here.” After a very interesting chat, and a cordial invitation to visit Canberra, I said good-bye.

When I arrived in Melbourne I found a city more closely resembling the English type, except that it was superior in several ways—firstly by its beautiful wide streets, and secondly through its highly developed sense of the value of beautifying its streets with trees, and similar artistic and sensible



embellishments, which are absent in the majority of our own towns. Climate encourages this, and makes the growth of foliage easier, but I do wish that, despite the variable English climate, our urban authorities would endeavour to make roads and avenues more attractive.

It was here that I had a most amusing experience, which was the outcome of my decision to spend some time at the zoo incognito. My wife and I set out early, armed with cameras, paid our admission, and prepared to enjoy ourselves, confident that no one knew where we were. I had to attend an official luncheon that day, and so I was determined to enjoy my morning in my own meandering way. We were gazing at the various creatures in their cages and enclosures when we saw, standing by our side a rather weary-looking little man who was carrying an enormous press camera. He was looking extremely hot and hopeless, and my wife, thinking he might be waiting for an opportunity to photograph me, asked him what he was going to do. He explained that he was there to secure pictures of kiddies offering worms to the platypus, as appeals had appeared in the Press asking for such "donations" to be made on that day. He did not seem very enthusiastic about the idea, but it was his job to watch for kiddies offering their worms to the strange creature, and he intended to stay at the zoo until he had photographed them. I left my wife chatting to him, and wandered off to play with the koala bears, for I am particularly fond of these winsome little Teddies, and it was not long before

I had a young one in my arms, which climbed on to my shoulder. The mother was perched on a branch above, watching her youngster snuggling against me, and this sight, as it appeared to my wife in the distance, created an unusually pleasing picture, for she shouted out : “ Cherry, Cherry, don’t move—keep perfectly still ! ” And she whisked out her camera to snap me. The little Press photographer, observing her excitement, and hearing her shout my name, turned and stared at me for a moment, and then said to her : “ I say, that is Cherry Kearton, isn’t it ? ” Not thinking what she was saying, and forgetting our plan to remain incognito, she replied : “ Yes—it is ! ” Immediately the little man lost his slowness and air of depression and hurried towards me. He was overjoyed at his opportunity to secure a “ scoop,” and his remark, as he took his first study, was one I shall never forget. He said : “ Golly, this is better than worms ! ”

When I left the luncheon that afternoon newsboys were rushing up and down the streets with early editions of the evening papers, and splashed across the front pages were magnificent photographs of myself in the koala bear enclosure !

We know of the speed of Fleet Street and the “ pep ” behind American journalism, but this example of rapid photographic reproduction in Melbourne would take some beating.

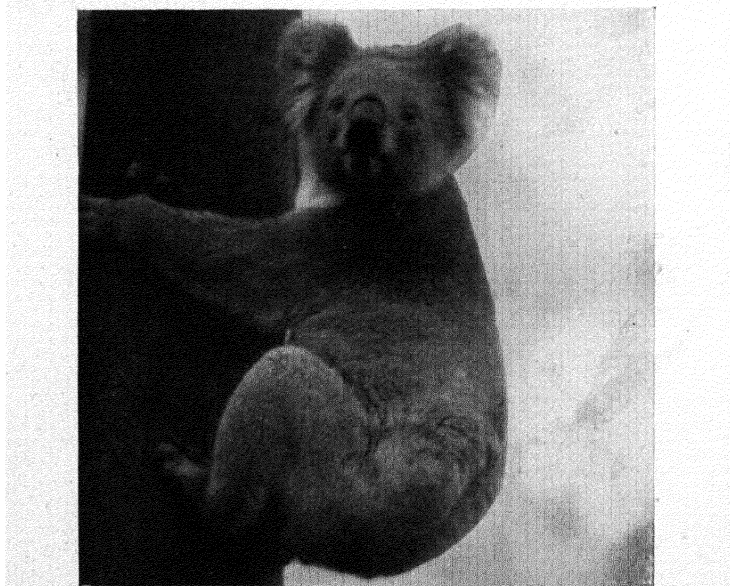
Whenever I think of that little Press photographer I always murmur the words : “ Even a worm will turn—into something better.”

Here I was lucky in making the acquaintance of two famous and very keen naturalists, Mr. Charles Barrett and Mr. R. T. Littlejohns, who took me far into the country to observe and photograph subjects which would have taken me weeks to discover by myself. Several parts we visited reminded me of Africa so much, that I often felt I had seen some of the places before. We travelled hundreds of miles, and I don't suppose any English naturalist has ever seen so much of the natural life of a country in such a comparatively short period as I did.





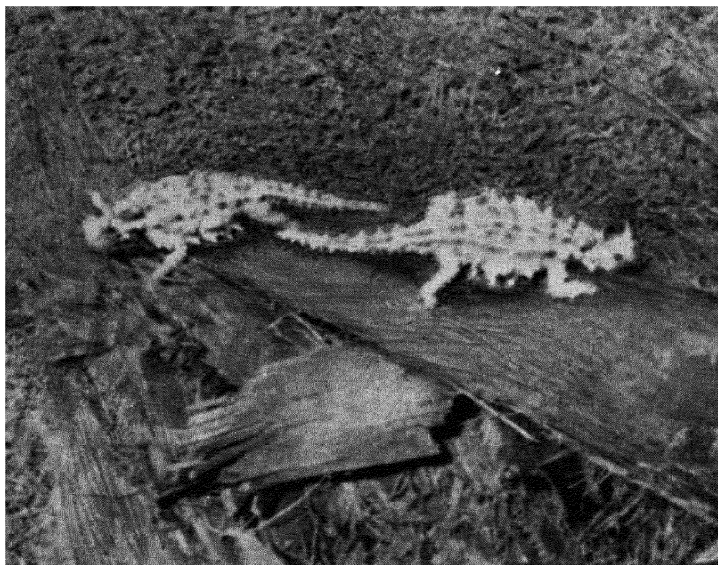
HOW THE KOALA BEAR CARRIES HER BABY



FASCINATING BUNDLES OF SOFT FUR  
STARED AT ME IN WONDER



THE KOALA BEAR FEEDING AND RESTING



(Above) MOLOCHS OR THORNY DEVILS  
(Below) THE ECHIDNA OR SPINY ANT-EATER



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CHAPTER V

*The Platypus*

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## CHAPTER V

### THE PLATYPUS

**A**LTHOUGH I have frequently cursed the motor car for its help to the bad sportsman, I must in fairness acknowledge its usefulness in other and more justifiable cases, such as my own, for without it I could not have penetrated so far inland. It is a curious fact that wild creatures do not seem to fear a car—to them it is merely an object without the movement of legs, which grows bigger and bigger, and so if the occupant knows how to keep quiet, and makes no visible movement, there is every chance of getting quite close to his subject. It was on one of these outings that I was to meet a fellow animal lover, who had studied, and actually tamed, that most illusive and interesting of creatures—the duck-billed platypus. Only a fortnight before, whilst staying with some friends about a hundred miles from Sydney, I was taken through some wonderful mountains to a spot known as Kangaroo Valley, where the platypus had one of its haunts. A short distance from the road at which we stopped was a stream, and wandering along its banks we came to a silent pool, which was the home of the platypus. Before attempting any photography, however, luncheon had to be thought about, and so we retraced our steps, and whilst selecting a suitable spot to picnic, I noticed that my friend was looking carefully at the ground, and, on enquiring the reason, he tersely replied, “Snakes.” Strange to relate, I never saw a snake whilst in Australia, and, stranger still, whilst I was in India

I was most anxious to obtain snake photographs and yet I only saw one. Throughout all my journeys in different countries where snakes abound I have seldom seen any, but on the rare occasions I did, our meetings were not what one would describe as pleasant. Apart from that, however, we had a most enjoyable luncheon, one course of which consisted of chops grilled between grid-irons over a wood fire—the fire being allowed to burn fiercely at first, until it was reduced to red embers over which my host did the grilling. I have never tasted anything so good, there being no need for sauce or any other appetiser to help it, for it is a perfect example of the simple, plain cooking which our forefathers enjoyed. I would infinitely prefer a meal like that to the elaborate meal of countless courses served in every big hotel. Observation has shown me that those who live simply, live happier and longer lives. As we sat eating amidst the beautiful wild surroundings the scents of the different trees—the eucalyptus predominating—were wafted to us on a gentle breeze, and were lovelier to smell than the most exclusive synthetic perfume money can buy. We then walked back to the pool, but the platypus had sensed us, and I saw nothing but a little black speck and then a ring of rippling circles on the surface, similar to those made by a big fish rising. After waiting some time I came to the conclusion that the crafty little fellow was watching us all the time !

The platypus was discovered over one hundred and forty years ago, and in those days was referred

to as the water-vole, and the paradoxical bird-beaked animal. When the first specimen came to England and people saw such a strange mixture of bird and animal, they naturally regarded it with suspicion, and suggested that so queer-looking a creature must be a fake. I think it was about the same time that mermaids were introduced, and later discovered to be made-up fakes, although not before a great many people had parted with their money. The platypus is really Nature's supreme paradox, firstly on account of its appearance, and secondly because of its habits. There is no animal in the world more worthy of a place in the world of freaks which Nature creates, and it has excited more scientific interest than most bigger animals, and quite as much controversy as prehistoric monsters. The platypus is covered with a short thick fur of a dusk-brown colour that is darker on the upper, and paler on the under parts of the body. Its tail is covered on the upper side with coarse hair, but the underneath is almost bare. The eyes of this creature are small, beady, and situated close to the beak, which is almost that of a duck. This beak is soft and round, and of a pinky hue at the tip, being well supplied with nerves, and an acute sense of touch as well as smell, by means of which the animal obtains its food. The female is smaller than the male, but both have webbed feet. As a rule only two eggs are laid, and these resemble the parchment-like eggs of a reptile. Incubation takes place in about three weeks, and during that time the female does not leave her nest.

It possesses milk-glands which when excited by its young exude nourishment through the skin, and the milk is lapped up. The male has a poison spur on each hind foot, connected to poison glands, and these spurs are interesting, for they are not unlike the fangs of a snake, being hollow, and consequently can convey poison right into the wound. The spur is quickly and effectively used, and so great care has to be taken when handling the platypus. Various statements have been made as to the effects of this poison, and there are cases on record where alarming swelling accompanied by great pain has been experienced. However, I have never heard of anyone who has died from the effects of the poison. It is one of the two survivors of the earliest type of mammals, which still preserve many traces of their reptilian ancestry. It is equally efficient swimming or digging, and it is a far more active creature than its appearance suggests, for looking at it few would imagine it to be such a first-class excavator. In addition it is an admirable climber, and the round top of its tunnel suggests that it places its back there, and its feet on the flat surface beneath. The fur, or hair, with which its body is covered, is admirably suited to an animal which lives in the water. I found that in its wild state the platypus is not easy to study, but I have no doubt that in certain quiet haunts, if a great deal of time were spent, good photographic results might be obtained, but much patience would have to be expended, for it is one thing to observe an animal

and quite another to secure satisfactory photographs of it.

Although sound and scent are apparently highly developed, its eyesight is considered to be rather poor, and when startled it immediately submerges, but a little later a part of its bill, extending to the nostrils, will very quietly appear, a sight which reminded me of my early days when I tried to obtain studies of the English water-vole, or rat, for although I was well screened, and had spent several evenings without any result, I at last discovered the secret. As the evening wore on and the rays of light struck the little pond I discovered he was watching me all the time, his little nose peeping out, but as the light caught his eye I spotted him. However, after remaining hidden for over a week he at last came out, and I secured my picture of him sitting by the side of the pond.

The platypus has one way of retiring to his little home that is rather similar to the vole's method, for it enters its burrow under water, and, like the vole, has several entrances. These burrows extend for many feet underground, and are beautifully polished, smooth, flat at the bottom and arched at the top, proving it is an expert at tunnelling. At the end of the burrow a space is hollowed out about twelve inches wide, and here the female builds her nest of dry grass, etc. The aborigines used to dig these creatures out of their burrows for food, and in the early days when in captivity the platypus was treated to bread soaked in water, minced meat, and chopped eggs, but there is no record of it living long

in captivity, as apparently worms form the major portion of its diet. Naturally, at certain seasons of the year this diet is extremely difficult to obtain, a fact exemplified by the little encounter I had in the Melbourne Zoo with a Press photographer, described in the last chapter, for the children he hoped to photograph, feeding the platypus with worms, were coming as the result of an appeal in the Press, issued at a time when worms were very scarce, and the only way to obtain them was through the generosity of the public, which it was hoped would bring all that could be dug up from private gardens.

It is interesting to note that the fur of the platypus is unequalled in Australia, and although the animal is strictly protected I received a letter from a man inviting me to buy forty-eight skins, with which, according to him, a beautiful fur coat could have been made for my wife. Needless to say, I did not reply.

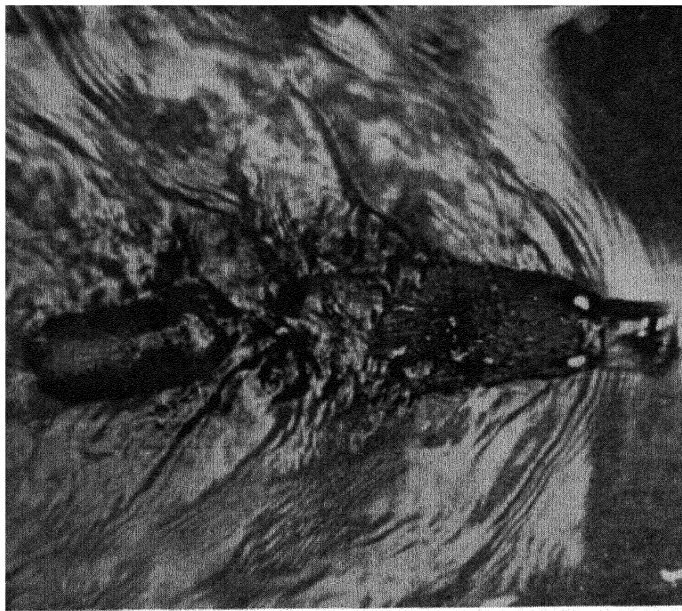
And now that we are familiar with the general characteristics of this curious little fellow let us take a trip to Healsville, where we shall see one at really close quarters. Turning off the main road soon after we left this town we find a very charming bungalow residence, typical of the pleasing homes of Australia, and we are greeted warmly by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Eadie, and invited into his study to chat and rest for a while.

It was some time before he began to talk of South Africa, where he had lived for many years, and I did not know many of the out-of-the-way places he





“ SPLASH ” ENTERING THE WATER AND FEEDING  
FROM THE HAND



### THE PLATYPUS

[ Nature's Paradox on land and in the water. . . . ]

mentioned, but I suggested that as my wife was a South African she would probably know them, and when I told him who she was he jumped up, rushed into the adjoining room where my wife was chatting to Mrs. Eadie, grasped her hand, and said, "Ada Forrest ! Now I know you. And to think I should meet you here ! Do you know that I never once missed hearing you whenever you were singing in Africa !" He was so delighted that I think he would have given her anything he possessed, including his beloved pet platypus, which he had kept alive and happy for three years by spending hours and hours studying and attending to its whims. If everyone took a fraction of the trouble with their pets as Mr. Eadie took over his platypus what a blessing to all dumb creatures it would be.

Imagine the pleasurable anticipation I felt when he at last suggested we should go into the garden where he kept his pet. Gaily-coloured flowers intermingled with tropical foliage framed the walk to the home of the creature, which consisted of a long tank, at the end of which was a box complete with a lid and padlock, and a small hole in its side allowed the animal to enter through a passage-way to the little platform in the tank. He unlocked the box, lifted the lid very carefully, and there, snuggling in some dry grass, was the wonderful platypus which had been appropriately christened "Splash."

At first he seemed to be asleep, but immediately Mr. Eadie touched him he came slowly to life, and then went towards the passage-way into the tank.

Soon he began to grow quite lively, and as I gazed at him I felt strangely thrilled, for had I not been trying to photograph him in one of his New South Wales haunts, and had I not, after spending long hours, to be content with a fleeting glimpse of a speck in the water, whereas here was a platypus at close quarters and at my service, so to speak? And believe me it was the queerest mixture of an animal I have ever seen, or hope to see.

Splash was given a few worms, which he devoured under water, and then he became playful. His presence was an undoubted record, for he had been in captivity for over three years, and was in perfect condition. He was fully grown, and measured about twenty-two inches in length, and weighed four and a quarter pounds. In those three years he had eaten over a ton of worms, and more than two thousand eggs, not to mention countless tadpoles and grubs. Splash was soon playing with Mr. Eadie, who gave him another feed of worms, and I thought as I watched him feeding from his master's hand, what a fine example he was of what can be achieved by patience and kindness. I was then invited to stroke his back, and he did not seem to mind. I feel sure that if I could have stayed a few days with him he would have been playing with me as heartily as with Mr. Eadie.

It is impossible for the average person to realize the extraordinary amount of work and care necessary to keep a platypus as a pet. When he first had him Mr. Eadie used to get up at all hours during the night and watch him, for he is a creature that

definitely has "off-days" when he will not eat, and this caused great anxiety, everything humanly possible being done to get him on to his normal food again.

I learnt that a full-grown platypus cannot exist on less than sixteen ounces of worms per day, and Splash has two eggs and also grubs.

Whilst we were talking about food the difficulty of ascertaining whether mud was an adjunct was discussed, and that made me think of the thousands of flamingoes I had seen feeding on a lakeside in Central Africa, where only very small insects could be expected from the mud. I imagine that the platypus in its wild state secures a percentage of its food in the same way.

After Mr. Eadie had had Splash for several months, one morning, to his surprise, he failed to appear when whistled and called for, and on opening the inner box which served as his sleeping quarters Mr. Eadie was horrified to see it apparently dying. It lay quite motionless, and after trying everything possible to revive it he gave up hope, when Mrs. Eadie persuaded him to take the poor creature into the house and see if the warmth of the fire would do him good. Accordingly, a hot-water bottle was placed in his box, together with some dry grass, and after a little while Splash began to move, and soon recovered. A week later the same thing happened again, and this led Mr. Eadie to think of hibernation, and so he decided to leave him alone, but in his anxiety he used to rise frequently during the night to observe his condition.

Fortunately, Splash recovered again, and soon made his appearance in the tank, and actually consumed over a pound of worms and grubs. When I tell you that during the week following the same thing happened you will have some idea of the amount of anxiety a creature like this can give. On the next and last time he was in this comatose state for a hundred and twelve hours, and I believe that other platypus in captivity have behaved in exactly the same way, which is not, apparently, due to cold.

By the way, the platypus does not possess any teeth, and in dealing with large worms it uses its front feet to assist in breaking them up by striking the portion which protrudes from its mouth or beak, and breaking it off. Curiously enough, when one tries to hold this animal the body seems to move apart from the skin, and thus suggests the movement of a reptile.

By systematic training Splash knew Mr. Eadie's calls, and looked forward eagerly to his visits, a very different state of affairs to those during the early stages, when Splash was so shy that he would hide away. At first he used to make a peculiar growling noise, and pretended to bite, but as he has no teeth, this was apparently done to frighten his master, and it took him a long time to gain his confidence, a process which must have been extremely tedious for both parties.

Thousands of visitors have been entertained by the antics of Splash, and Mrs. Eadie told me that numbers of mops are constantly being sent to him

as presents, a choice of gift which seemed strange until I saw the keen delight with which he played a game of his own invention, which, incidentally, I was privileged to film. Holding a kitchen mop in his hand, Mr. Eadie held it near Splash in the water, sometimes stroking him with it, and immediately the platypus made frantic efforts to secure it, clinging to this, whilst being swung to and fro, and then dropped into the water. But in a moment he was up again, ready for another thrilling swing, to be followed by a fall into the tank again, and whenever the mop was withheld from his grasp or moved along and over the surface of the water he would follow it excitedly. It seemed to me that when he took hold of the mop he first seized it with his bill, and then his hind legs were thrown forward so that the mop was gripped with his claws. This movement placed the animal on his back in the water, so that I was able to see exactly how the claws secured a strong hold of the mop. In this position the platypus assumed a half-moon shape, and I remember noticing how short his legs were, and that all his efforts to bring his front legs into action seemed in vain. When I mentioned this to Mr. Eadie he explained that the claws of the front feet are rather blunt, and have little or no hook, whereas the claws of the hind feet, which are adapted for gripping purposes, are hooked and much longer.

It was a delightful sight to watch Mr. Eadie and Splash playing together, and he told me that if he did not continue the game as long as Splash wished

the little chap would stand upright against the wall of the tank, and would express his acute disappointment by dropping back into the water over and over again. This seemed to me most extraordinary, but, then, he is an extraordinary animal. Another interesting fact I learnt was that certain colours affected Splash in different ways, blue in particular giving him the blues, at which times he revealed the fact that he possessed a temper. Like the penguin, the platypus would starve to death in captivity even though surrounded with food on the ground, for it must find it in the water. I noticed that food in the form of worms was put into a dish some three or four inches under water, and that sometimes Splash came to the surface apparently chewing the worms.

I spent a good deal of time with the beaver many years ago, both in Canada and America, and its tail was very similar to the kind adorning the platypus, only the latter's was much shorter; however, both animals use their tails as rudders.

It was a fascinating sight to watch Splash at his toilet after he had been playing, for on the little raised platform at the entrance to his sleeping quarters he stretched himself out, and began a vigorous cleaning. The claws of the hind feet were bunched together to create a small comb, and then, lying on his side, he commenced to scrape his fur with rapid movements. The hip of the platypus is constructed on the ball and socket principle, enabling him to twist and turn the limb in any



direction. When I inquired if this careful toilet was a daily occurrence I learnt it was generally done after a feed of worms, and that before retiring most of the water was removed from the fur by this vigorous process.

Without hesitation I should class Splash as the star comedian in Nature's Non-Stop Variety show, for in addition to his ludicrous appearance he is so very amusing and playful.

Mr. Eadie presented me with a most interesting book he had written entitled *The Platypus—Its life and habits*, beautifully illustrated by Mr. Morwell Hodges, giving his most interesting observations and experiences—a book of extreme interest to all.

Full of regret I bid farewell to my little friend Splash, and then to Mr. Eadie, one of the most kindly and genial souls I have met, and away we drove towards Melbourne, passing through rather flat, though extremely beautiful country. Suddenly, our driver slowed up and turning round, said : “ In front of us on our left was the home of that great singer Madam Melba.” Naturally we were intensely interested, for there, hidden from the public gaze, was the house and garden beloved of the great artiste, possessing a beautiful outlook across open country, with the mountains in the distance. A small world surely, for it seemed but yesterday I sat and listened to Dame Nellie Melba's bell-like notes in Covent Garden. How fortunate we of this generation are to have so many mechanical marvels to provide us with music, and,

moreover, to enable us to enjoy the voices of those great singers who have passed on. Our grateful thanks are indeed due to the gramophone for enabling the genius of Melba to be ever with us.

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CHAPTER VI

*The Kookaburra*

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE KOOKABURRA

**I**T is a strange fact that the bird known as the kookaburra, or laughing jackass, should be classed as a species of kingfisher, for it lives miles away from any stream, and, as far as I know, has never caught any fish ; but I am forgetting I saw fish-eating birds, including cormorants and kingfishers living at Lake Naivasha in Kenya, and yet there was not a single fish in that lake ! I discovered they were living on frogs, and I actually photographed a kingfisher outside its nesting hole with a little frog in its beak, which it was taking to its youngsters. But on the other hand, the kookaburras are reputed to catch snakes, and, on this account have, I think, escaped destruction, although the law of protection for them has also been strictly enforced. All men, irrespective of their colour, have a great regard for the bird or animal which destroys what is universally recognized as being the most repulsive and dangerous of creatures. The mongoose is another example of an animal that has been saved many times from destruction because it is an expert killer of snakes. Kookaburra is an aboriginal name, but in the early days, the bird was called the "Settlers' Clock," and now, amongst other names, it is called laughing jack. I imagine that the name jackass is not at all popular with the Australian public, and I can quite understand it, for there is nothing to connect the jackass with the kookaburra, either by sound or behaviour ; on the other hand, the jackass

penguin, which lives off the coast of South Africa, decidedly deserves its name, for it constantly brays during the night exactly like a real jackass.

The popularity of the kookaburra is easy to explain, for its funny mannerisms and antics, together with its infectious laughter, endears it to anyone with a spark of humour and imagination. It reminds me very much of our English jay, with the exception of its vocal accomplishments. Incidentally, as I write, I can see a couple of jays within fifteen yards of my study window, behaving exactly like several kookaburras that I watched for some time, whilst trying to take their photographs in a forest on the top of a hill.

The kookaburra was by no means a stranger to me when I saw it in the National Park near Sydney one Sunday morning, for over thirty-five years ago I had a great friend, named Frank Aarons, who lived near me in Surrey. He was a keen naturalist who had been born in Sydney, and whilst with me on one of my photographic journeys on the Norfolk Broads used to entertain me with stories of the wonderful Australian birds, such as the laughing jackass, and the lyre-bird, which he used to study on the outskirts of Sydney, and strangely enough it was close to Sydney that I first heard the kookaburra laughing, and its merry peals brought back vivid memories of my friend of long ago. No wonder the Australians love this quaint little bird, which has made such a deep impression on young and old, and has laughed its way to fame. As a friend of mine said, a bird that can laugh like

that is worth its *mirth in gold* ! It must be a funny sight to see the young being given a lesson in laughing, which I am assured they do, and to hear their early efforts. Kookaburras nest in hollow trees and in tree termite nests, and live chiefly on small reptiles, insects, and larvæ, but I am sorry to say, like our jay, have a bad habit of taking young birds, and have even been known to kill the British blackbirds, which were introduced into Australia.

One day I was wandering through the countryside, about twenty-eight miles from Melbourne, and upon reaching the summit of a high hill I saw a wooden shack that provided light refreshments, and upon entering I was agreeably surprised to observe the perfect taste with which it was furnished, in a simply way, which proved once again that the Colonists are adepts at making the best out of very little, by living up to the old motto about necessity being the mother of invention. Here, for instance, there were neither chairs nor tables, but merely logs of wood stood on end, and smaller logs with sections cut out of them for seats, on which were placed cretonne cushions filled with grass, which, incidentally, were extremely comfortable. From the windows I could see a wonderful panoramic view of wooded hills, and beautiful valleys, whilst in the distance lay an expanse of water, backed again by hills silhouetted against a wonderful sky.

The sole occupant of the place was a girl of about eighteen, and an Airedale was her only companion.

When she entered the room with some tea and scones I was immediately struck by her quaint but charming personality. She possessed small, clear-cut features, very expressive eyes, and an air of dignity which was distinctly pleasing. Just at that moment a kookaburra flew past the window and settled on the arm of a rustic seat outside and, seeing my interest in the bird, the girl told me a most interesting story. It appears that years ago the lady who owned and lived at the shack was washing clothes outside in a large tub, and that nearby was a bowl of hot water, and to her consternation, on turning round she saw a young kookaburra struggling in it. She quickly rescued the bird, took it indoors, and fed it each day on very finely chopped steak, until ultimately it recovered sufficiently to hop about in and around the shack, and it became quite tame and friendly. At times it would disappear into the trees for an hour or more, but it always returned to her call. However, one day, much to her grief (and to realise the intensity of such sorrow one must try to understand how, in such a lonely spot, the comfort and companionship which even a little bird can offer is immense), it disappeared. The poor woman at last gave up all hope of ever seeing it again, when some months after, to her great surprise and joy, not only her pet kookaburra returned, but also Father Kookaburra, and a family of three little ones ! She fed them regularly and they all became very tame, and lived in the trees around the shack. In time they increased to thirteen—surely a proof



of their gratitude for her kindness—and to-day they provide a continuous performance for visitors. Just as she finished her story another kookaburra joined its mate outside, and she said : “ It’s getting near their feeding time. Would you like me to call them from the trees for you ? ” The trees were about a hundred yards away. I nodded, full of interest at this extraordinary companionship, and she disappeared for a moment into the next room, returning with a small amount of chopped-up meat. Then following her outside, I was amazed to see the two kookaburras, which were sitting quietly on the arm of the seat, fly up at once and alight on her shoulders. She gave each of them a small piece of meat and said : “ Wait, and I’ll call the others.” Standing there, with the two birds on her shoulders, silhouetted against the beautiful background of the surrounding country, she called : “ Come on, come on, come on ! ” Instantly, from the clustering trees five or more kookaburras flew to her side, as she sat down on the rustic seat. They surrounded her, some perching on her arm, others on her lap, whilst those on her shoulders settled down more comfortably, and she gave them each their portion of meat. As I walked quietly up, they allowed me to film them barely five feet away, and the photograph reproduced is taken from the actual film.

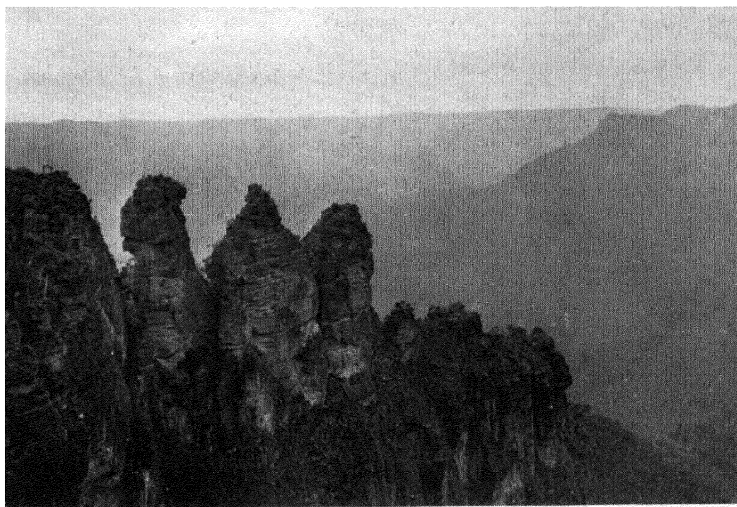
I became so attached to these little fellows that I longed to own a couple, and just before I left Australia, Taronga Park Zoo of Sydney generously presented me with a pair, if I could obtain the

sanction of the Government to allow them to leave the country. Accordingly, I approached the Secretary of State, who graciously accorded me an interview to discuss the proposition, and he explained that whilst not wishing to deny me the pleasure of taking them home, it would create a precedent which might entail difficulties for them in the future, whereupon I thanked him and said that on no account would I be a party to anything that might jeopardize their protection. And so I reluctantly said good-bye to the little fellows and left them in Australia ; but would you believe it, as I walked away the little beggars started laughing !

#### THE EAGLE

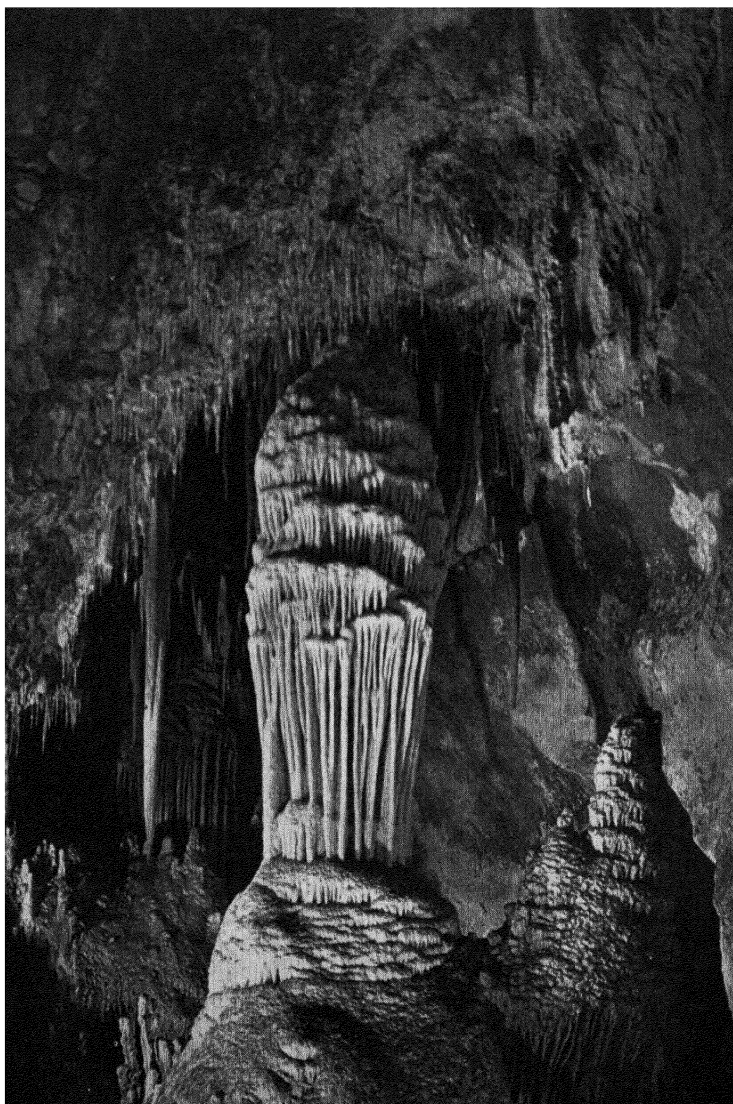
Most impressive of all the sights are the forest trees of Australia, amongst which are some of the tallest in the world—so colossal and stately are they that one feels like an ant lost amongst them. Their trunks present a fine clean-cut appearance, like so many giant poles reaching up to the sky, many having high commercial value as hardwoods.

Amongst a group which I saw high up on a hill in one sample acre, the trees averaged 266 feet in height, and the tallest was 301 feet 6 inches. These were white mountain ash—*Eucalyptus Regnans*—and the tallest hardwood species in the world. Thinking of these majestic trees, it used to alarm me to see so many big forest fires, and it was whilst looking down from a hill at the devastating advance of one of these fires, sending its great volumes of



(Above) THE THREE SISTERS (BLUE MOUNTAINS)

(Below) KOOKABURRA LAUGHING



THE MINARET—GENOLAN CAVES

smoke skywards into the still air, that I happened to turn and look across country in the opposite direction. My high position commanded a view of a big stretch of undulating country, when two magnificent eagles sailed into view, a majestic sight as they grew larger and larger. They were flying almost on a level with me, so that I was able to obtain a perfect view of them, and then, as if to give me a special treat, they sailed round in a quarter mile circle, and repeated the performance, for which I was glad, as only on one other occasion have I seen these powerful birds in flight. My companion, pointing to them, said, "Eagle-hawks," which did not seem to me to adequately describe them, and certainly if I had not seen them myself, I should have connected them with something much smaller on account of the word hawk. Afterwards, I discovered from Mr. Barrett that they were also called the wedge-tailed eagle, and they reminded me of the golden eagle which I had watched many times in Scotland, and the American eagle in the Rockies, and the African eagles. It is claimed to be the largest eagle in the world, but this is debatable, for it has an average wing spread of approximately seven feet, whereas our golden eagle is estimated to have from five to eight feet. With regard to its destructive powers, the same trouble exists in Australia as in Scotland, where I have found in its nest hares, rabbits, and an occasional bird, and I think the same applies to the Australian eagle, for although he may, on rare occasions, kill a lamb, he makes up for it by killing

scores of rabbits. These birds build very large nests, sometimes eight feet in height, and it is gratifying to hear that photographic records have been made of them in their nesting sites, for to obtain such pictures necessitates hard work and great difficulties, including spending three months in a hide-up, to secure results from the brooding stage to the young being fledged.

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CHAPTER VII

*The Lyre-Bird*

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE LYRE-BIRD

**T**HE perpetual pageant of amusing and unusual creatures to be found in Australia can best be likened to an All Star show week in London, except that Nature puts on an infinitely more original entertainment than man could ever devise ! When I had seen and heard the kooka-burras' laughing revue, and the acrobatics of the platypus, I did not think any greater novelty could appear, and yet there was much more to come.

Long before I left England, one of my ambitions was to study and photograph the lyre-bird, and it was through the kindness of Mr. Charles Barrett, and that great authority on the lyre-bird, Mr. R. T. Littlejohns, that I was enabled to go straight to its haunts, where I saw its nest and dancing mounds. It was in Sherbrooke Forest in the Dandenong Ranges that I first made the lyre-birds' acquaintance, and what a superb setting to meet them in. Giant ferns of fantastic design mingling with towering trees, the foliage of which almost shut out the daylight, making one feel one was standing in the dim depths of some ancient temple. Suddenly, the great stillness was broken by a few faint notes which denoted the lyre-bird, and so I began cautiously to advance, my feet sinking into the decayed undergrowth. I went along softly, as on a carpet, in the direction from which the sound had come, and it was not long before I saw a slight movement and discovered it was the female scratching vigorously with her large feet and

scattering damp leaves, rotted wood, and bark, in all directions, apparently searching for food, which must consist of minute insects, for I never saw her with anything large in her bill, although I was only a few yards away, and yet she was feeding. Sometimes the falling of a leaf or twig made her abandon her search and run a few yards, but after standing motionless for a second or so, she would begin all over again. I have seen the same thing occur with big game in Africa, but in such cases I put their sudden fright down to the presence of a snake suddenly raising its head when the animal was feeding too near.

For over an hour I stealthily stalked her in that dark, humid forest, as silent and as windless as a crypt, and gradually I drew closer and closer, although she was forever moving along and changing her ground. However, at last I was within nine feet of her and took a photograph as she paused in her scratching amongst the dead leaves. Apparently she thought I would not do her any harm, for she merely looked up at me for a few moments, and seeing me standing motionless, was satisfied I was harmless, and so resumed her scratching with her big powerful feet.

When I had taken two or three more pictures, I rejoined my companions, who delighted me with the news that the male had been sighted nearby. At that moment I heard him, and at once commenced another stalk, for I was most anxious to study his wonderful plumage. But I knew I had a far harder task, as the male is of a much shyer

disposition than the female. Nevertheless, with extreme caution and patience, moving forward inch by inch, and foot by foot, I at last got to within twenty-five feet of him—and what a picture ! I was lucky enough to see him with his tail erect for a few seconds, and the beautiful sight reminded me of my first view of the Argus pheasant in the forests of Borneo. I followed him up and around a hill into a little valley, and then he led me, back again almost to the spot we had started from, when I realized that by my concentrated exertion, in the humidity of the forest, I was wringing wet, but until then the excitement of the chase had so distracted me from feeling fatigued, that I suddenly felt doubly tired. I was carrying out one of the greatest ambitions of my life—for years I had looked forward to this moment—to photograph one of the greatest artists of the feathered world. And there I left him to enjoy the uncanny stillness of the forest, whilst I was one of the happiest men in Australia.

The lyre-bird may be truly described as the wonder-bird of the world, so remarkable are its powers of mimicry. To look at, its extraordinary long legs and stout toes give it a superficial resemblance to game birds, but again its magnificent tail lifts it into another category. This consists of twelve wire-like feathers, and two narrow plumes with much less web on them, and lastly a large lyre-shaped feather at each side. There are two species of lyre-birds—the common Superb Lyre-bird *Menura*, and the rare Albert *menura*. The former inhabits

the coastal areas from southern Queensland to eastern Victoria, residing chiefly in forest country with thick undergrowth, and having a particular liking for ferns, and gullies, among the hills. The Albert lyre is confined to the tropical scrubs of southern Queensland and the northern rivers of New South Wales. To the ordinary observer there would appear to be nothing in common between our tiny British wren and this glorious bird which is as large as a pheasant, and yet the fact remains that they both belong to the same family and both are insectivorous.

The lyre-bird greatly puzzled the early naturalists, and for many years after its discovery in 1798 there was a certain doubt as to its relation to other birds, its big feet and long legs attracting as much interest as its curious tail, and, as a result, a number of different ornithological authorities each had their own name for it. In Australia several people agreed with me that the name lyre-tail would be most appropriate. In 1800 the lyre-bird's generic name, *Menura*, was given by General Thomas Davis in a paper read at the London Linnean Society, but I cannot discover when the name lyre-bird first came to be used, although I do know that Louis Figuier referred to it in his book, published in 1889, as "lyrtail." It is interesting to note that the lyre-bird breeds in the coolest months of the year in Australia, and that it is leisurely in all its habits, and even when building its nest it is utterly different from most birds, which lose no time during such a period. It constructs a large domed-top nest, in

various positions, ranging from one nestling on the ground, to another fifty feet up in a tree. One which I examined was by the side of a small gully, in the bank, and surrounded by beautiful ferns, whilst another was on the fallen trunk of a tree-fern, and so, presumably, they nest in all sorts of sites, including even caves, and rocky ledges, quickly adapting themselves to the kind of country they happen to be living in.

The nest is made of small twigs and sticks, it reminded me of our English wren's nest, but much more roughly made. Bark, mosses, and dead leaves form the interior walls, whilst soft feathers seem to be favoured for the lining. Nest-building operations are carried out entirely by the female, which, by the way, lays only one egg, and feeds her chick without assistance from the male. This one egg is usually about four to five weeks before hatching, and from five to seven weeks before the chick is fledged. The young lyre-bird is an ugly little creature, covered with down for several weeks, and it is hard to believe it will ever evolve into such a handsome fellow as its father, possessing an unequalled voice, and uncanny mimetic powers. The male bird clears a space of about four feet of ground, forming it into a dancing mound. He makes a series of these, visiting them in turn, and upon each he performs his ballet, consisting of weird contortions and displays of his beautiful tail, which he spreads out like a fan, and then gives vocal imitations of many of the other birds in the forest.

That famous English naturalist, Gould, who

studied the lyre-bird in Australia as long ago as 1838, wrote: "Were I requested to suggest an emblem for Australia from among its avifauna, I should, without the slightest hesitation, select the lyre-bird as the most appropriate, it being not only strictly peculiar to the country, but a bird which will always be regarded with the highest interest both by the people of Australia and by ornithologists in Europe." Having had considerable bird experience around the world myself I quite agree.

Most of the dancing mounds I saw appeared to have been recently used, and I learnt that there was generally one favourite mound amongst them.

Listening to the lyre-bird for the first time is a most curious experience, for I heard at least a dozen distinct notes of different birds of the forest. Of course, like all creatures, some are more gifted than others, but they are all great mimics, and some have as many as a score of items in their repertoire.

Although a shy bird, in captivity it becomes exceedingly tame, so tame in fact that it has been known to perch on a stranger's shoulder. Whilst in Sydney I heard of a man who had built a large cage around two birds in their particular haunt, and that to-day, through this process of gradually caging them in, they are absolutely tame and contented. Whilst in the Blue Mountains, perched on a rocky point some two hundred feet above the forest, I listened to this species for quite a long time. It would often stop singing in the middle of some imitation, as if listening, and this reminded me of my efforts in Surrey over thirty-five years ago to

record, on big wax cylinders, the thrush and the nightingale, on what was then called the phonograph, for directly I started the machinery, and it began to cut the wax, the bird would stop to listen, and these lyre-birds were stopping in exactly the same way. Thanks to the microphone, their notes can now be captured from a distance, and some truly wonderful photographic sound records have been made of their vocal accomplishments by an up-to-date Government department in Melbourne.

I understand that the habits of the Albert lyre-bird are much the same as those of the *Menura*, and that it has the same gift of vocal mimicry, but the two birds differ in the ornamentation of the tail. One of the olden names for the bird was "native pheasant," which dates back to the time when Sydney was only a settlement. The Blue Mountains at that time were no doubt a region of mystery, but the bush, and its denizens close to Sydney, were penetrated by many hunting and exploring parties, and it fell to the lot of one of them to shoot the first specimen of the lyre-bird in 1798, and owing to its resemblance to the pheasant no doubt many white men, as well as blacks, contributed to its destruction, but it is now strictly protected, and rightly so.

As an example of what destruction may lead to I would refer to that scavenger, the fork-tailed kite, which, in the sixteenth century, was one of the greatest sights of London, yet to-day there are only two or three pairs left in the British Isles, and these are struggling for existence under protection in a remote part of Wales. If only the authorities at

home had been alive to the facts this would never have happened, and Australia is to be congratulated for introducing protective measures before it is too late.

Just as there are a great many birds around and close to London which the majority of people know nothing about, so my friend Mr. M. S. Sharland pointed out that it would surprise many of the people of Sydney if they were told that the lyre-bird built its nest within twelve miles of their General Post Office. In the early days before protection scores of lyre-birds were killed for their tail feathers, and as much as two and sixpence was paid for them, after which they were put to all sorts of uses, even including the decorating of fire-screens.

Incidentally, I hope to publish a book next autumn on my Surrey Garden, and I venture to prophesy that both the illustrations and the subject-matter will surprise quite a few Londoners, for I shall reveal the number of birds living within fourteen miles of the heart of the capital, which are passed by the hurrying city crowds every day unnoticed.

To tell the life-story of the lyre-bird would be most interesting, and I do hope that some of those keen Nature enthusiasts I met in Australia, who have almost lived with these birds, and are such capable field naturalists, will publish a book about it, for they have already filmed and recorded its imitative sounds and notes with excellent results.

How well I remember one day roaming in the forests and coming upon a notice that visitors could



be supplied with teas, for there was no building in sight, but after climbing a dozen or more steps the pathway ran through some thick bush and ferns, and there before us stood a house and some neglected wooden buildings. Two young Irish ladies served us with a most delightful tea, and I was most interested in the place, for the house commanded a magnificent view, perched high up on the mountain, and even the shrubs and trees seemed to have been grouped by an artistic hand. One of the hostesses, seeing that I was interested, asked if I would like to explore the grounds, and upon agreeing I was somehow not at all surprised, as we walked towards a long wooden building, when she explained that it had been the studio of a great photographic artist, long since dead. Inside the studio, on the floor, and covered with dust, lay a number of broken  $15 \times 12$  glass plates, beautiful negatives which had been taken in the days of the wet-plate process. They consisted of priceless studies of scenery and early native life that would be very difficult to duplicate. Later I discovered that the artist had been a German, who had spent many years of his life in this romantic and beautiful spot. What a tragedy that all his work was destroyed—work which revealed such genius. What a tragedy, and what hidden memories ! As I turned my back on the place and walked away I felt very sad.



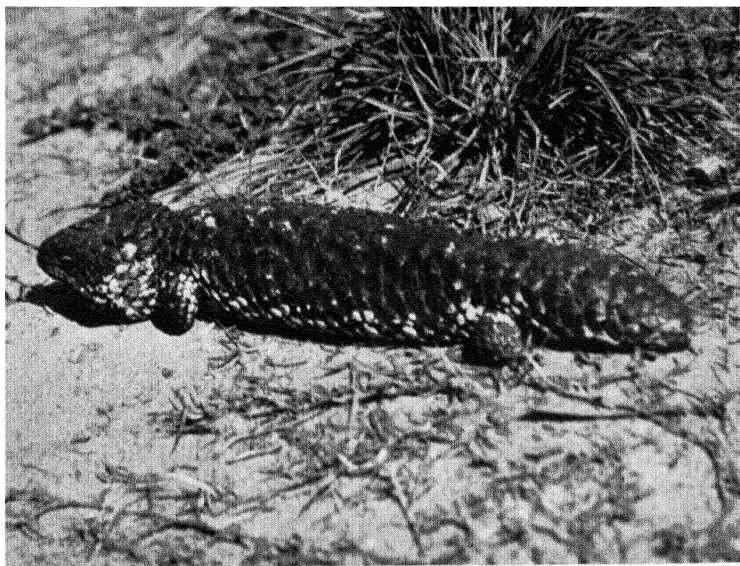
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CHAPTER VIII

*The Stump-tailed Lizard, and Giant  
Earth-Worm*

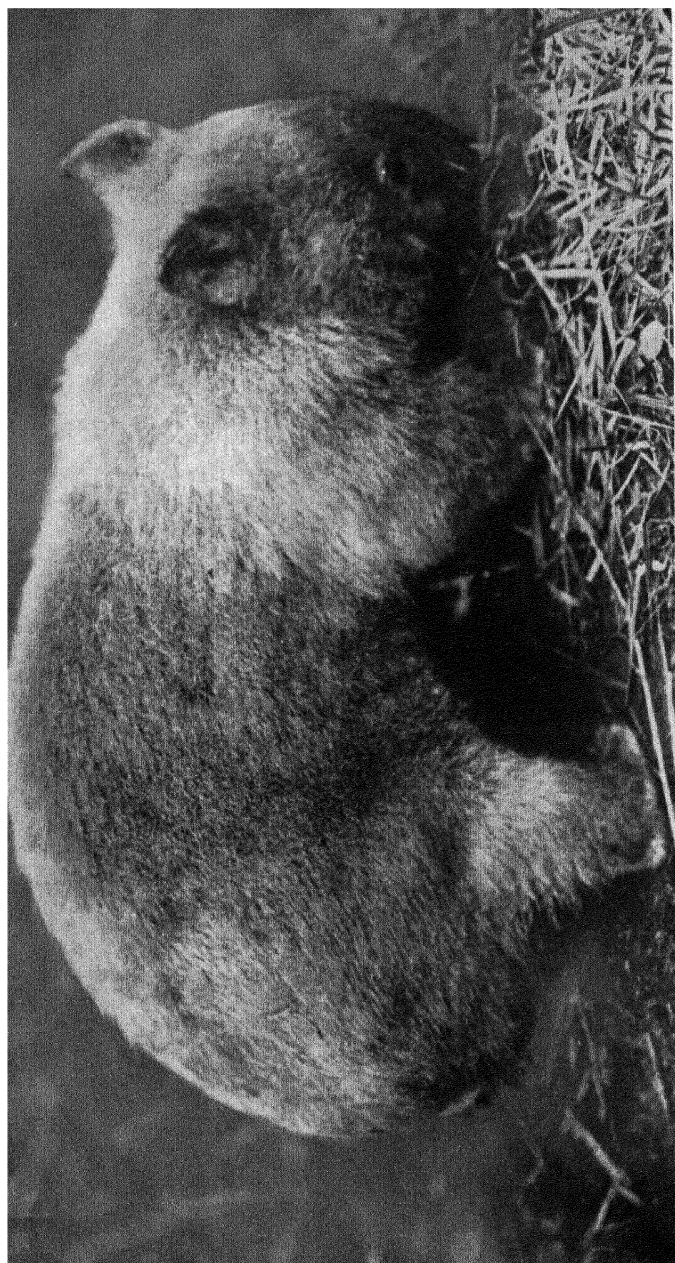
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(Above) THE STUMP-TAILED OR TWO-HEADED LIZARD

(Below) THE OPOSSUM



WOMBAT





THE AUTHOR WITH AN INQUISITIVE FRIEND



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE STUMP-TAILED LIZARD

**A**PPROPRIATELY enough, I was introduced in a very curious way to the very curious two-headed, or stump-tailed, lizard, which is another of Australia's queer creatures, for I actually had one given to me as a present, whilst spending a most interesting evening at Mr. and Mrs. Charles Barrett's house.

Firstly, I was introduced to a pair of kookaburras, which solemnly looked at me whilst sitting on the back of a chair, and which later proved how tame they were by allowing me to caress them. Next, a tortoise was brought in, and within a few moments his head suddenly popped out, and I saw he was of the long-necked species. Then, to keep the fun going, Mrs. Barrett brought in a bearded lizard, which was quite a fearsome-looking creature, that sat on my knee, and seemed to enjoy being stroked, which was very different to the one I had tried to make friends with in another part of the country. Naturally, by this time I wondered what was coming next, when the stump-tailed lizard made its appearance, and proved to be even more friendly than its eccentric companions, for it also enjoyed being stroked, and it took such a fancy to me that in the end Mrs. Barrett asked if I would like to take it to England. I should have been delighted, but I had not the heart to take it from the home it had enjoyed for three years, which proves that even an extremely ugly lizard can be attractive enough to gain one's sympathy and affection. Unlike the

majority of the lizard species, these stump-tailed creatures are born, and not hatched from eggs, and in a few days the young grow to a remarkable size, in fact, nearly half as big as the mother. It is called the two-headed lizard on account of the extraordinary resemblance which the tail bears to the head, and there is a rather curious story of its discovery at Sharks Bay, in Western Australia, in the year 1779, which appears in *A Voyage to New Holland* by Captain William Dampier. "The land animals that we saw here included a sort of guanos, of the same shape and size as other guanos described, but differing from them in three remarkable particulars, for these had a larger and uglier head and no tail, and at the rump, instead of a tail there, they had a stump of a tail which appeared like another head, but not really such, being without mouth and eyes ; yet this creature seemed by this means to to have a head at each end, and, which may be regarded as a fourth difference, the legs also seemed, all four of them to be fore legs, being all alike in shape and length, and seeming by the joints and bending to be made as if they were to go indifferently either head or tail foremost. They were speckled black and yellow, like toads, and had scales or knobs on their backs like crocks, plaited on to the skin, or stuck into it as part of the skin. They are very slow in motion, and when a man comes nigh them they will stand still and hiss, not endeavouring to get away. I never did see such ugly creatures anywhere but here."

Even this somewhat frightening description does

not exhaust Australia's freaks, because Mr. Barrett gave me quite a shock when he described the giant-worm, and said he had arranged a special trip for me to go to its haunts and meet it. This sounds like a fish story, but, nevertheless, it is a fact that the giant earth-worm is as thick as a garden-hose, and in its normal state measures from three to six feet in length, but on extending will stretch itself out from six to twelve feet long. This I am sure must be the grandfather of all earth-worms. When it was discovered in East Grippsland, Victoria, speculation was rife as to whether it was a new kind of snake, or worm, and I can quite understand such bewilderment.

It was on one of those beautiful starry nights which so often appear in Australia that we walked along the garden path towards the front gate, and two sea-birds, standing by the side of a small pond, suddenly made a slight movement and uttered a few calls, whilst a little farther on the two kookaburras were sitting on a branch side by side, just as they had done on the arm-chair in the house. The car lights in the roadway threw them into silhouette, and they were only a few feet from the ground, a prey to any wandering animal, and within a few feet of the street pathway. What a delightful picture they created—a perfect Darby and Joan, symbolizing contentment—and I thought then, as I have often thought since, that this home of a great naturalist, which spelt complete happiness for so many strange creatures, showed clearly how fear had been overcome by kindness and

understanding. As we drove away I took a last look at the two kookaburras perched on that tree, and as the car lights slowly swung round the little figures faded into the velvet blackness of the night, but that picture of them will never fade out of my mind.

#### THE GOANAS-MONITOR LIZARDS

Australia has its monitor lizards just as Africa has, but, I think, possesses many more species, ranging from some barely eight inches in length to giants measuring up to seven feet. I have often been scared by them when making a sudden dash through the undergrowth, for they make a noise loud enough for an animal many times their size. I have never seen them in the trees of Central Africa, but in Zululand I frequently encountered them quite high up, interlacing themselves in the branches, and unless one is quite observant and on the look-out, they would never be spotted. On one occasion I was passing a small bush, when I heard a loud hissing noise, which made me jump at least two yards sideways, and when I turned to look for the cause I saw a big monitor about six feet from the ground, on the branch of a dead tree. I had always been curious about the "dragons" of Komodo, and so when passing a zoo in Java I called in and had a look at two of them, but I was very disappointed, for they were not much more than five feet long, whereas when the first report reached London from Komodo about these

“ monsters ” the description of them made me think of the fish that “ got away ” ! Nevertheless, in their natural state they live in caves, and grow to a great size. Many years ago I remember trying to find a similar monster that was reputed to be living in a cave near the seashore in Borneo, but which, in my opinion, was nothing more than a big monitor. Five thousand pounds had been offered for this creature, which could only be seen at full moon, and I was foolish enough to try and secure that sum by exploring the cave. At the entrance it was about eight feet wide, and as many feet high. I had not penetrated into it very far when I heard a curious sound, which I felt sure must have been made by the dragon, but which turned out to have been caused by some thirty or forty big bats as they flew past me. Luckily, I had an electric torch which enabled me to see that the cave ahead narrowed to such a degree that I had to discard my coat and start crawling on my hands and knees. And then, after going some distance, I stuck fast, and realized what it felt like to be a round peg in a square hole, and it was a long time before I managed to wriggle backwards and free myself, leaving no small amount of skin behind me. The only traces of the “ monster ” I saw were some parchment-like eggs about the size of a dove’s, which were obviously those of the monitor. Now, I have always found the monitor to be quite a good-tempered fellow, and not at all difficult to handle, but I was told that some of the Australian species could be very disagreeable. Both in Australia and Africa they

often live miles away from any water, and their diet ranges from small snakes, to eggs, birds, and rabbits. In Australia the oil from the animal is supposed to possess a curative property, and its skin is now of commercial value for ladies' shoes and handbags. In Africa, too, the same value is placed upon it, which seems a pity, for in the latter country I know they have been considerably harassed or depleted.

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CHAPTER IX

*The Echidna, or Spiny Ant-Eater*

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE ECHIDNA, OR SPINY ANT-EATER

**P**ORKY, or porcupine, as it is generally termed, belongs to the lowest of the mammalian class, and is only to be found in Australia. This ant-eater is similar in shape to the hedgehog, or porcupine, and is as keen on burrowing with its peculiar limbs as it is on the ants which it eats with the aid of its long tongue. I think its first recorder was Shaw in 1792, and he called it ant-eater, but later it was decided that it belonged to the same group as the platypus, for it has a perforated spur on the heel, which at one time was supposed to be poisonous. Actually, its correct names are the long-spined echidna, or the porcupine echidna.

It is about a foot in length, and the upper part of its body is covered with strong spines, the under portion being hairy, whilst the long, tapering slender snout is bare. It has strong short legs, and the front ones in particular are armed with powerful claws, and it is also assisted by an inner toe on the hind feet, as a result of which it can bury itself in the earth very quickly. Its long tongue helps it to catch its prey, consisting mostly of ants, but it has no teeth. It obtains saliva for this long sticky tongue from large glands under the lower jaw, and when a sufficient quantity of ants have been collected on it, they are conveyed to the mouth, and swallowed much in the same way as the chameleon and the giant ant-eater feeds. I could not help thinking of our English hedgehog when I was looking at it, especially when I heard that both black and white

men ate it much in the same way as gypsies do in England. When kept as a pet it lives like our hedgehog on bread and milk and soft boiled eggs, and has the same propensity for wandering. Once I remember meeting a lonely man, who lived in an out-of-the-way place, telling me about his pet hedgehog, and saying that it would sometimes creep into bed with him, and when I said, "Don't its spines prickle you?" he explained that the thoughtful hedgehog made them lie flat, but as I could not contradict him, and had no ambition to find out if his statement was true, I let the matter drop.

But Porky has the advantage over the hedgehog, for he can dig himself out of sight in a few minutes, unless caught on hard rocky ground. Although protected by game laws, he is often killed by man, but he is more than a match for most of his animal enemies.

They are fairly well distributed throughout Australia, and I am assured they are in no immediate danger of extinction, although a permit is necessary to keep one, even as a pet. In its search for ants it digs into decaying tree-stumps and logs, and even turns over stones, and it is also an expert at demolishing the strong termite hills. It does not confine its activities to the darkness, but may be seen in the very early hours of the morning, and even sometimes during the day, in fact, it has been spotted lying on its back with its limbs outstretched on a mild day, but it cannot stand strong sunshine.

You will agree it must be included amongst the

wonders of Nature when I tell you it lays eggs, or rather, one egg, which is hatched in its pouch, and then for several weeks the young one is carried about by its mother, finally being deposited under a bush or other sheltered spot, and as soon as the spines are showing through the rubber-like skin it leaves its home on its first quest for food. It rolls itself up into a ball, but not so successfully as the hedgehog, although, as I have said, it digs very speedily and exposes its prickly back to any animal which may try to attack it.



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## CHAPTER X

*The Flying Squirrels and Opossums,  
the Wombat, the Emu and Koala Bear*

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## CHAPTER X

### THE FLYING SQUIRRELS

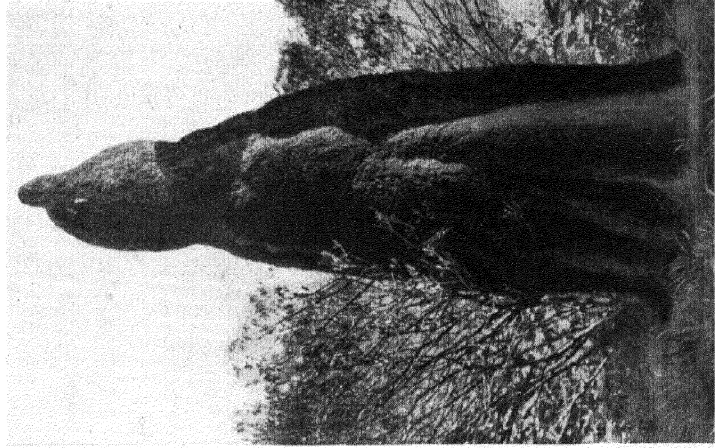
**A**USTRALIA'S flying squirrels are extremely difficult to study as they are nocturnal, and it is only in the early evening, or on a moonlit night, that they can be seen, except on rare occasions when they are disturbed during the day, and so I was surprised to hear that film studies had been taken showing it in flight. The American who visited England last year, and demonstrated how he could fly by jumping from an aeroplane and depending on large wings, was, in reality, portraying the principle on which the flying squirrel travels. In fact, the first photograph I saw of him immediately reminded me of this strange animal. Of course, in both cases it is not flying in the real sense of the word, but gliding. Now there are several kinds of flying squirrels and opossums, varying in size from a mouse to about twenty-five inches, and they are all vegetarians. Their limbs are adapted for climbing among branches, in a most expert acrobatic style, and they are exceptionally pretty creatures, possessing lovely eyes and attractive faces. Some of them have suffered considerably, because their coats are of value to the fur trade, and so extensive has the destruction of them become that it will be a long time before they recover, as, for instance, in Victoria, where five hundred thousand silver-grey opossums were slaughtered in one season !

## THE WOMBAT

The wombat is yet another distinctive and unusual Australian creature, although it is not very spectacular. It belongs to the kangaroo family, and is about two feet in length, possessing a small stump of a tail, a low body, strong limbs, and small feet, which are well provided with claws—a stockily built little animal, with a coat of moderately long, coarse brown fur, that is of a brownish grey hue. In their wild state these wombats spend their days in their burrows, which are generally near old tree stumps, but at night they roam forth to feed on the vegetation, and their tracks can generally be found amongst the bracken and ferns. They can dig with great skill and it is amazing how soon they can get underground. When in captivity they are docile and not at all difficult to keep. One of the many I saw had become a great pet, and seemed to spend most of the day snuggled up in the lap of its young girl owner. What struck me most was the extreme hardness on its rump, and I was told that even a severe kick would make no impression on it at all.

It will no doubt surprise the reader to learn that the wombat has caused the downfall of many dental students in their anatomy examination, for although a marsupial, its dentition simulates that of a rodent—a pair of sharp-edged incisors in either jaw growing from persistent pulps—but unlike rodents a complete covering of cementum passes over the enamel. Also, its teeth differ from other





AUSTRALIAN ANT-HILL



AFRICAN ANT-HILL



*(Above)* THIS IS NOT A FOOTBALL TEAM!

*(Below)* HALF A SHAVE DENOTES RANK

marsupials in that the dental tubes do not penetrate the enamel, and so, dental students, beware the wombat ! Although mild and harmless, its teeth may prove one too many for you !

#### THE EMU

The emu is another member of Australia's vanishing creatures, and is to be found in no other part of the world, and like the kangaroo, it is a supporter of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

The earliest mention of the emu is in Captain Philip's story of his voyage to Botany Bay, published in 1787, when he named it the New Holland Cassowary. Later, it was carefully studied by Bennett, who gave it the name of emu, which was also used by the early Portuguese voyagers for a great bird of Malacca. To me it looked like a miniature ostrich, only more compact, with shorter neck and legs, and very small wings which are hard to distinguish when folded close to its body.

It is rather sad to think that this harmless bird, which at one time could be seen round Botany Bay, is doomed, and once again through the advance of civilization. Like so many animals in Africa that have been blamed for sleeping sickness and other diseases, the emu is believed, in Queensland, to carry the cactus, or prickly pear, and therefore it is destroyed, although no proof, as far as I know, has been forthcoming that this is a fact.

It reminds me of a recent case of the wholesale slaughter of animals in Zululand, where it was

claimed that they carried a certain disease, and yet I do not think that the individual responsible had any real proof, otherwise, during the terrible slaughter, he would not have started to invent "fly-traps," which, to say the least, showed a weakness in his belief. How many times have I heard that the elephant, or the crocodile, were carriers of the dreaded sleeping sickness. After crossing Africa from east to west, and spending part of the journey in the worst sleeping sickness area, I happened to be chatting with a man who thought he knew something about it, and I asked him : "Now what animal, in your opinion, do you think is the carrier of sleeping sickness ?" He promptly answered : "The zebra, my friend, the zebra, and nothing else." In reply, I said : "It may interest you to know there was not a single zebra within miles of the sleeping sickness area where I have been in the Congo !"

The emu is the second largest of all living birds, and it can swallow a great quantity of liquid at a time, and like the camel, can live for several days without renewing the supply. It resembles the ostrich in so far as it can travel at great speed, having been known to reach thirty-five miles per hour, when tested out by a motor-car, and it is upon the strength and swiftness of its legs that it relies in escaping from its enemies, the horse and the dog. Also, like the ostrich, it takes little or no trouble in making a nest, and the male sits on the eggs during the day-time and also takes charge of the chicks after hatching, guarding them fiercely.

It lays an average of from seven to eight eggs, but sometimes seventeen and even eighteen have been found, undoubtedly the result of two birds, and one finds the same with the ostrich.

Unfortunately I was there at the wrong time of the year, for these birds breed in the winter months, which, strangely enough, are June, July, and August ! They can be watched from a short distance, and they may even approach one, especially if a red cloth is waved in front of them, which is sure to attract their attention, a method by which they are also caught and killed.

One day I am certain that the majority of Australians will notice how blank and lifeless the plains have become, when the emu has disappeared from the landscape. I am speaking from experience of the places in Africa that were once crowded with animals, and which, to-day, are merely vast, uninteresting, empty plains, for all the animals have gone, and I frequently said in the past that when Nature's creatures have been driven away or killed the great African continent will no longer interest me, nor the thousands who study with interest the lives of wild animals. I am aware, of course, that the settler has to be considered ; nevertheless, wholesale slaughter is not always necessary.

From February 1st, 1926, until December 1st, 1928, the Prickly Pear Land Commission of Queensland caused the destruction of one hundred and thirty-one thousand, seven hundred and sixty-eight emus, there being a bonus of two and sixpence

a head, and one hundred and nine thousand, three hundred and forty-five emu's eggs, bonus, one shilling an egg, and whilst this wholesale destruction was going on, an entomologist actually found two thousand, nine hundred and ninety-one injurious caterpillars in the stomach of one emu !

#### THE KOALA BEAR

The Koala Bear was first seen by a young explorer who journeyed to the Blue Mountains in 1798, but it was not until 1810 that the first illustration of one appeared, and this was more in the nature of a caricature. This little bear is a native of Australia, and a survivor of past ages, and up to the present it has not been possible to keep it in England on account of its diet, which consists of the leaves of gum trees that are eaten in large quantities, and no substitute has so far been found in the British Isles.

There are approximately four hundred varieties of eucalyptus trees ; the koala feeds only on about twenty of them. It has good claws and is naturally an excellent climber ; it is a slow-moving little fellow and sleeps most of the day in the trees, where it makes itself comfortable in the forked branches. As evening approaches it wakes up and enjoys a hearty meal of gum tips. It eats enormous quantities of these leaves.

I was astonished to hear that its appendix is nearly eight feet in length, and to prove to me this was the case, I was actually shown one. Having

suffered from appendicitis, I sympathize with the koala if it ever develops the complaint, for so large a pain in so small an animal seemed out of all proportion, but it seems that the long appendix is to aid digestion, as its food is so extremely indigestible. Personally, I should prefer a smaller appendix and a lighter diet !

As a rule only one cub is born, in the winter, and at birth it is about one inch long. Then, like the kangaroo, it attaches itself to the teat inside the mother's pouch, and it is not until several months have elapsed that it emerges, covered with fur and fully developed. When walking about, the mother carries her youngster on her back, but if she sits down she clasps it in her arms, or rests it on her lap. Curiously enough, koala bears, as a rule, have only one youngster every two years. It is the quaintest little fellow imaginable, with a large stumpy head, little brown eyes that positively shine, large bushy ears, a big black rubbery nose, which gives its countenance a pronounced Jewish appearance, arms that are longer than its legs, and no tail. It is normally docile, but if teased or tormented it can give a nip that will quickly make one realize it must be treated with respect, and if a nip is not a sufficient lesson, then a scratch that will leave its mark will follow. Its average life is about fifteen years, and at the age of four it reaches maturity, when it is a little larger than a large Persian cat. Its fur is soft, rather short, and completely waterproof, and ranges in colour from shades of silver, fawn, grey, to very dark brown,

whilst the chest is white. The fur carries a very healthy odour of eucalyptus, and that possibly is why it is free from vermin.

The mothers show affection for their young by fondling them in almost human fashion, even stroking them, and they present such a charming picture, being so inoffensive and mild as they look at one in wonder from the trees, wearing the most comical expressions. I stood watching one that wanted to change from one tree to another, and after it reached the ground and had travelled a couple of yards it took fright and bolted back again. However, after a little while it seemed to gain confidence, and when it did go it made a terrific bolt for the other tree and looked perfectly ludicrous, but the point which surprised me was the speed of its movements.

When eating, it never hurries, and often stops to gaze around with an expression of complete indifference to everything and everybody. I happened to be interested in the koala bear long before I went to Australia, for I had heard of someone outside Sydney who had solved the diet problem by giving one bread and milk, with a teaspoonful of eucalyptus oil at each meal, and although I made exhaustive inquiries I never traced the source of the information. And that reminds me of last autumn, when two London newspapers came out with the report that a koala bear had got loose at Eton College, and was finally captured on the roof, after having climbed a water-pipe, but not until three or four days later. The report also stated that



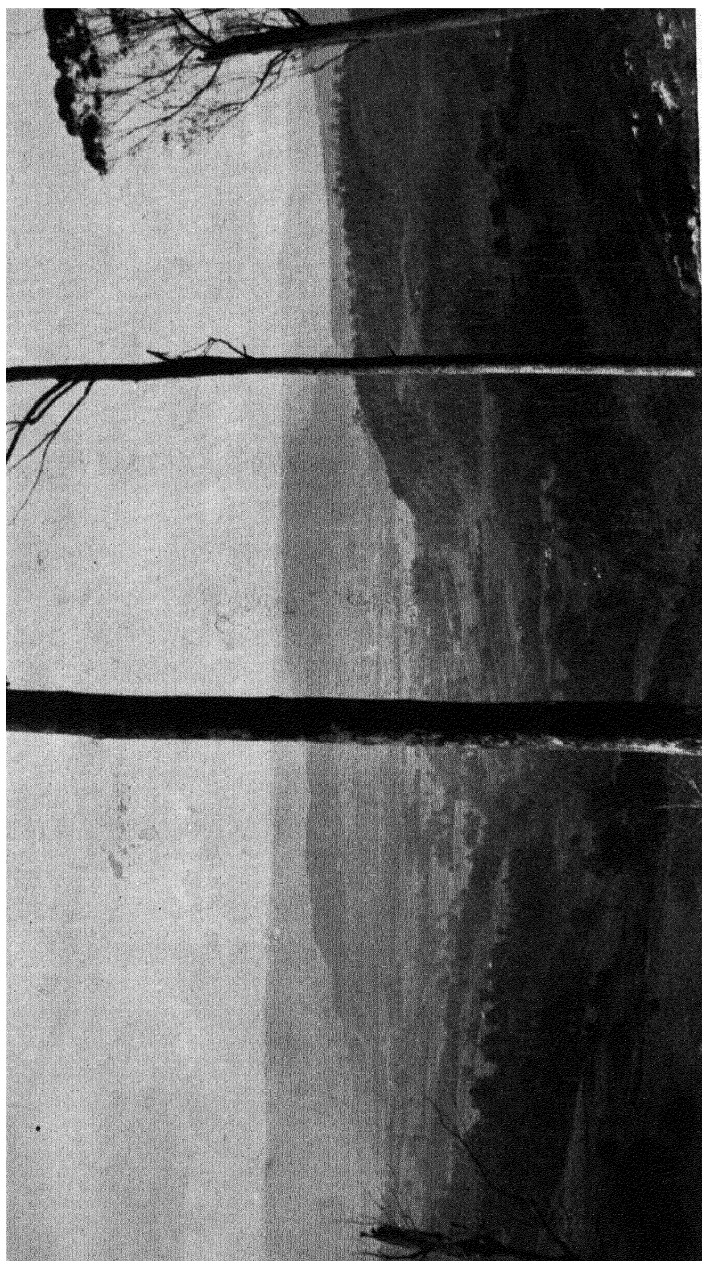
the bear was a pet of one of the students, and I thought that someone else must have solved the diet problem, but after spending two days trying to trace both the boy and the bear, I finally discovered the whole story was untrue.

Very few people have the chance of seeing the koala in its wild state nowadays, but it has to thank the nature-lover for its existence. However, I am glad to say it has hundreds of friends and admirers in Australia, who can study it in the several reserves, or parks, in New South Wales and Victoria, where a serious effort is being made to save it from complete extinction. Personally, I can think of no happier way to spend an afternoon than by driving out to the Sir Colin Mackenzie Sanctuary at Healesville, or the Koala Park near Sydney, which lends itself so well to camera studies, to watch these delightful creatures, without which no photographic visit to Australia would be complete. Pages could be written on the interesting little fellow, who came so near extinction through his trust in Man, for although he inhabited the eucalyptus forests for thousands of years, the aboriginal did not trouble it a great deal, and it was only when the white man raised his hand against it that nature-lovers realized it was becoming rare, and so the Government wisely took steps to protect it, saving it just in time. Although good work is being done for it, I am afraid that the haunts it loved to frequent in that vast and wonderful country will know it no more.

I guarantee that ninety per cent of the visitors

to Australia, on being asked what they would like to see first, would say, "The Teddy Bear," meaning, of course, the koala. In the days before the law of protection came in, these defenceless creatures were shot in thousands, many apparently by thoughtless youths, who imagined they were sportsmen, but a more apt description would be "devils," for it was not a case of pitting their skill against the little animals, nor was there any stalking necessary. In fact there was no more skill needed than to shoot a canary in a cage. Thus, millions of koala bears were reduced to one thousand, in Victoria alone, which shows how urgent are the present efforts to save them from extinction. In 1927, Queensland declared an open season, and more than five hundred thousand of the little wonder animals met their fate simply to satisfy pelt hunters. But their sufferings have not been solely due to Man, for disease has been responsible for the death of thousands. To-day, instead of being found in many places in Australia where it used to be a common sight, its only stronghold is in the northern state.

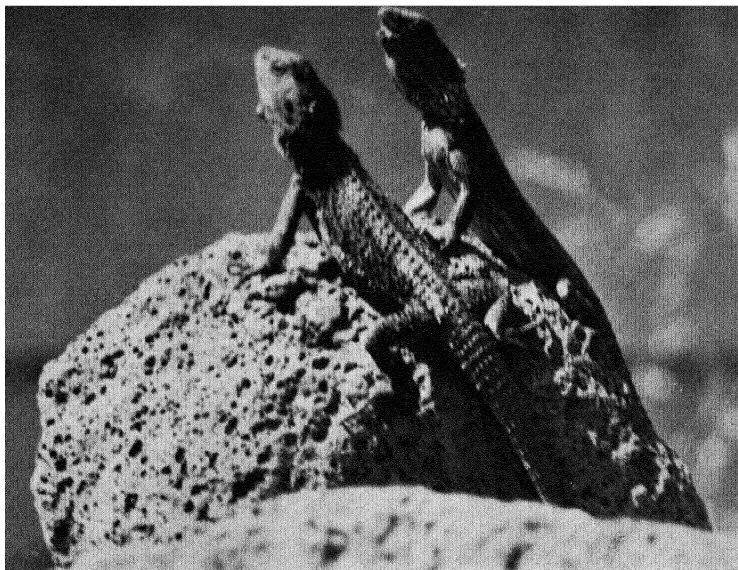
As the koala bear is not allowed to leave the country, and even if it were it could not be kept alive, the next best thing the visitor can do is to bring back one of the excellent models which are made in various sizes, to serve as a reminder of this winsome, lovable little fellow, and one finds most of the passengers on board ship armed with at least one each in their cabin. In fact, as I write I can see one now sitting quaintly on the piano,



KANGAROO VALLEY



THE HAUNT OF THE PLATYPUS



BEARDED LIZARDS AND COMMON LIZARD



THE TUATARA

which was presented to my wife out there, and she treasures it as if it were alive. Needless to say, it is the envy of all the children who visit us, and when I tell them it feeds on eucalyptus, they think it must be suffering from a very severe cold, and refuse to believe me when I explain that it likes the stuff!

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CHAPTER XI

*The Kangaroo*

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## CHAPTER XI

### THE KANGAROO

**I**N the year 1770 that great circumnavigator, Captain Cook, was on the coast of New South Wales repairing his ship, and a party of sailors were ordered to land and procure food for the sick, and when these men returned to the ship they described an animal they had seen which possessed such grotesque proportions that Cook himself was tempted to investigate, together with Mr. Banks, afterwards Sir Joseph Banks, and so they landed and went in pursuit on the following day. A herd of strange animals was sighted, and their short front limbs, great hind legs, huge tails, and the tremendous hops they made as they bounded away bore out the startling descriptions of the astonished crew, for these men had seen, for the first time, the Great Kangaroo in its wild condition on its own ground. Soon afterwards a specimen was shot, notes were made about it, and some skins were brought over to Europe, incidents which enabled this animal to become known to the civilized world.

The kangaroo has always interested me, especially as I had heard so much about it whilst camping out in German East Africa during the war. An old Australian big-game hunter friend—who, incidentally, was killed by a lion a few years ago whilst trying to rescue his native gunbearer—always adhered to his belief that animals like the kangaroo and the koala bear were not born, but just grew on the teat inside the pouch. I remember his repeating this during the war, when sitting round the camp-

fire with Selous and myself, and when we tried to explain matters he grew somewhat indignant, saying he ought to know considering he had seen a youngster inside its mother's pouch when it was no longer than one's finger. Of course he was right, up to a point, but the fact remains that when these creatures are really born they are only a couple of inches long, and then they are carefully placed in the pouch by the mother. The mystery is not how they are born but how they manage to survive. When fully grown the kangaroo has been known to hug an enemy with its powerful short fore limbs, leap away with it to the nearest water, and then by forcing it under the surface, drowning it. It is a great fighter, and its general method of attack is to hug a victim, and then, with its powerful hind foot claw to rip it up. Of course, it is a vegetable eater, and that is why it is such a trouble to the settler.

To see the kangaroo at home is one of the most interesting experiences imaginable, for its movements are totally different from those of any other animal, except, perhaps, the jumping hare, or the jerboa in Africa, the former being nocturnal, and therefore very difficult to study except by powerful car head-lights. When one thinks of Australia one naturally thinks of the kangaroo, but it is surprising, upon actually visiting the country, to discover that there are so many species of them—in fact, no less than seven, excluding the wallaby, which is very similar, and has a number of different species of its own, differing only in minor ways to the kangaroo.

Again, there is the tree kangaroo, a rare specimen I had the privilege to see at the Sydney Zoo, for it was not on exhibition, having only just arrived, and consequently being in a very nervous state. Of the tree kangaroos, only two kinds appear to exist in Australia, for the other species, of which there are about ten, inhabit New Guinea, a country, by the way, which I should certainly visit were it not for the presence of land-licees.

The tree kangaroos spend much of their time on the ground, climbing trees only when in search of food, which they find amongst the foliage, or when danger threatens them. They seem quite at home in high trees, and can easily jump down fifteen to twenty feet to the ground, alighting nimbly on their feet.

During the one hundred and sixty years which have elapsed since that party of sailors returned to Captain Cook's ship, the *Endeavour*, with their report about this animal, millions have been killed, in order to save the farmer, as the food was badly needed for cattle and sheep, just as in the same way the native has been driven from his territory, and it is on record that from 1877 to 1902—a quarter of a century ago—the Queensland Government alone paid for the scalps of nearly seven and a half million marsupials, kangaroos and wallabies, and I was sorry to find that these creatures had also been hunted by man for sport with dogs and motor cars, in the same barbaric manner that hunting is encouraged in other parts of the world. I fail to see where the element of sport enters into such

merciless slaughter. To-day, in those places where the kangaroo has become rare, hunting is forbidden, and a Government permit for its destruction can only be obtained upon furnishing proof that it is doing serious damage.

As I have said, the speed of these animals is marvellous, and I believe they have been known to jump as high as nine feet, and it is an everyday occurrence for them to clear a fence or hedge six feet high. When moving at great speed it depends on its hind limbs, bounding twelve and even sixteen feet at a jump, holding its body almost horizontal, and the tail pointed outwards as if to balance it, as you can see in the accompanying picture. Its front feet are used very much like hands, being brought into action for many different purposes. Although it has disappeared from the vicinity of large towns, it is sometimes met by motorists in lonely country tracks, and is often spotted amongst corn or wheat, in which, of course, it is trespassing, and is therefore ever ready to bound away.

It is a creature which leads a tragic life, when one realizes that in addition to being the victim of Man it is subjected to the terror of the eagle, which preys on the young ones, and also the dingoes, which hunt in pairs, or packs, dragging the kangaroos down, and tearing them to pieces. But a pleasanter picture of its life is visible in the evening, when it can be seen with its family making its way to their favourite feeding-grounds, and as dawn breaks they return home again. When going out to feed the



LOVELY FOREST SCENERY



STALACTITES IN THE GLOW-WORM CAVES



“ old men ” generally lead, but when hunted they form the rearguard, and in this they are similar to lions, save for a reversal of the sexes, for when a number of lions are together and are chased the lionesses form the rearguard, and if one is killed another supersedes it. Another most unusual picture in the wilds is to see the kangaroo enjoying a dust-bath, which it also utilizes as a bed. At one time kangaroos and wallabies were as numerous in Australia as the buffaloes on the vast American plains I have so often traversed, but which to-day seem so bare without animal life, and this state of affairs will undoubtedly occur in Australia, for all has changed, even to the native life. The hand of progress, though beneficent in many respects, always moves with a sweeping gesture and casts aside most existing conditions, whether of animal or man. Indeed, the time may not be far distant when, in certain parts of Australia, the kangaroo will be very rare ; but what a grand sight it must have been before settlement seriously started ! And yet it is only natural that the settler and kangaroo cannot live together, any more than the settler and the zebra can be on amicable terms in Africa, for we must realize he has a most difficult job to make a living. There is plenty of land left in this vast country, and given proper reserves much can be done to save so extraordinary an animal from the fate of, say, the South African quagga, which only a few years ago could be counted in thousands and yet to-day is extinct.

The largest of the kangaroos, which are to be

found in both the red and the grey species, are as tall as a man, and I well remember, many years ago, seeing one at the old Aquarium—since demolished—in London, where it was advertised that it would box a man. I was quite a young man at the time, and a keen amateur boxer, so that this novel idea greatly intrigued me. I entered immediately, and found the place packed, and everybody expectant. My eyes were glued on the stage, wondering from which side the contestants would enter, and so you can imagine my excitement when they suddenly appeared from each side of the stage, the man in boxing attire, and the kangaroo hopping in on its long legs. Then the gloves were put on them, and the kangaroo's short arms made it look extremely funny, although quite businesslike. There was a proper referee, and whilst he was announcing "England versus Australia" the kangaroo solemnly squatted down, using its tail as a support. Its ears were very erect as if it were listening, although its face was expressionless, in the true boxer tradition. At the word "time" the kangaroo was alert and ready, and a fast exchange of blows took place. At the end of the round the kangaroo ignored the rules, and instead of going to its corner delighted the audience by landing a smack at his opponent, who was naturally unprepared. That kangaroo was a marvel, and could box to perfection, and, what is more, appeared to enjoy it, although I noticed that sometimes when it was getting the worst of it the man was very careful to keep clear of it when it had a tendency to hug him, or lift up its

hind foot, for danger lies in its long great toe, with which it strikes in its wild state to defend itself, easily killing a man. At the finish of the fight they were both quite happy, and I wondered then, and have often done so since, at the extraordinary patience that must have been exercised to get a kangaroo of such size under control. As far as I can remember over so many years, I think Australia won that boxing match, to the delight of the audience.



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CHAPTER XII

*The Ant and X-ray Spider*

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## CHAPTER XII

### THE ANT AND X-RAY SPIDER

**A**NYONE wishing to study ants can find plenty of material in Australia. A great number and variety of these interesting creatures are to be found there, in fact, men who have devoted years to their study have recorded something like one hundred and eighty different species. At Cape York Peninsula in the north of Queensland, and especially in the neighbourhood of Albany Pass, ant-hills form a conspicuous feature of the landscape, and there is even Ant-Hill Point, so called by one of the earlier navigators, and it is indeed a most suitable name. In passing through the Straits one's attention is drawn to many huge monumental-looking erections, and it is extremely difficult to realize that these are nothing more or less than ant-hills—made without human aid and by such tiny insects. Some of the ant-hills are fourteen feet high. In Africa I have actually seen one that was twenty-seven feet. Thus the white ant, or termite, being about one-eighth of an inch in height, builds a fortress over two thousand times its own size, and to equal this, Man would have to construct an edifice two and a half miles high. The ant-hills are so firmly constructed that they are impervious to rain, and I have even seen an infuriated rhinoceros try to smash a small one without making any noticeable impression on it !

The formation of the mounds in Australia differs from those in Africa, as the former vary a great deal from each other, but on the whole the plan of

construction is broadly the same. However, a peculiarity of the Australian mounds is that they sometimes assume a mushroom shape whilst others taper to fine points, and furthermore they collect in the magazines finely chopped grass for the food storage chamber. In the African varieties I found merely a kind of caked yellowish substance.

Now I have been speaking so far of mound constructors, but I must also mention those ants which live and breed in subterranean passages and galleries excavated within the dead wood, or standing timber, on which they feed. The destructive power of this species of ant is a terrible menace, and I encountered a vivid example of this in Africa in a wooden house that looked perfectly secure, which collapsed like a pack of cards, for the ants had eaten all but the thinnest layer, leaving, in fact, nothing but the bark.

Ants have been introduced into various countries by ships, and there is a record of this taking place as far back as 1780. Some species found in France and Portugal were brought from North Africa, and I suspect some of the Australian species came down from the north in driftwood. In 1870 a very destructive species of white ant was accidentally introduced into St. Helena by a captured slave ship from tropical America. Such were the ravages which this species committed on that island that in Jamestown, the capital, the larger number of the buildings were destroyed and had to be rebuilt, the damage to the property being estimated at no less than sixty thousand pounds. Some of the results of the de-



structive work of this termite are narrated by J. C. Melliss in his book, *St. Helena, 1875*, in which he says : " It was a melancholy sight, five years ago to see the town desolated as by an earthquake or, as a visitor remarked, by state of siege, the chief church in ruins, public buildings in a state of dilapidation, and private houses tottering and falling. Another remarkable phenomenon chronicled through the termite agency was the singular spectacle of a large margossa tree in full foliage which, without warning, and to the great discomfiture of two native policemen standing near, was seen to sway, totter, and suddenly fall to pieces. On examination it was found that the inside of the tree was completely eaten away, leaving only the thin external shell."

#### X-RAY SPIDER

The insect world of Australia is quite as interesting as that occupied by larger creatures, and to go into details of many of them would necessitate a separate book, but I feel I should mention here the X-ray spider, which is very similar to one I photographed in Borneo some years ago. Saville Kent, who studied this spider, says : " It is a common but at the same time notable scrub spider which also frequently takes up its abode in the Brisbane suburban gardens. The feature most distinctly visible is the singular supplemented additions to its ordinary orb-shaped web ; these take the form of four zigzag, thick, ribbon-like bands, or rays, of the web substance, weaved in such a manner as to

form the letter X. This spider undoubtedly stole a march on Professor Röntgen, centuries ago, in the invention and practical utilisation of mythical X-rays."

Strange to say, many years ago I described this spider in Borneo and called it the X-ray spider, without previous knowledge of the fact that it had been already christened with that name.

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CHAPTER XIII

*The Blue Mountains and the Aborigines*

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

**T**HIS part of the country was in vivid contrast to the other regions I had visited, and I quickly saw the necessity for a high-powered car to traverse the seemingly endless roads that became lost in the mountains, for without such mechanical transport one would resemble a blindfolded man trying to escape from a maze. I am not surprised that the early explorers found themselves "up against it" in these parts. However, once one is on the summit one looks down into huge well-wooded valleys, studded with big rocks and cliffs, through which waterfalls thread their way in a drop of five hundred feet. The scenery is breath-taking in its majestic beauty, and the almost magical colouring of this natural picture is one of the features, for a curious blue haze pervades the atmosphere as far as the eye can see, creating a most extraordinary effect, and over all is a faint perfume of eucalyptus mingling with the scents of flowers. Looking down on this delightful panorama one might almost be in an aeroplane. As in all the forests of Australia these are populated by a great variety of birds, the colours of which stand out vividly against the green of the foliage. Parrots make the biggest contribution to this feast of colouring, on account of their size, as compared to many of the smaller birds, although these are beautifully plumaged too. And when one has enjoyed such feathered delights one turns with fresh admiration to gaze at the waterfalls, the

volume of water which is swayed about by a current of air rising from below, compelling it constantly to alter its graceful shapes, and sometimes it resembles a snake as the wind catches the water on its long downward sweep. And then, in an instant, the glittering, bending pillar will become transformed into spray, and then lost, whilst, at others, it appears to turn and climb back up into the valley again. A century ago this must have been an extremely wild piece of country, bearing no trace of man. To-day, though quite unspoilt, the building of roads through its mountainous heart has enabled people to share its rare beauty with Nature's creatures. I know of only one other place like this—the Grand Canyon in the western states of America—and many an explorer must have been broken-hearted when he reached the end of the valley and found hundreds of feet of sheer precipice barring his way out, and forcing him to retrace his steps, and try another deep valley, only to be met with the same despairing result.

In the midst of this grandeur, hidden amidst the seclusion of this enormous virgin forest country, is the greatest wonder of all, the Genolan Caves, renowned chiefly for the beauty of their decorated limestone caverns, of which there are eleven, and to show their beauty to the best advantage, there are cleverly concealed electric lights, which reveal the extraordinary crystal formations, almost making one believe one is in fairyland.

Genolan is an aboriginal word meaning “high mountain,” and as the road ascends to some 4200

feet, it is most appropriate. Apparently, these caves were discovered in 1838 by a man named James Whalan, whilst he was following the tracks of stolen cattle to the camp of an outlaw named McKeown, and the beauty of these caves proved attractive even to the adventurers of those days, in spite of the dangers and difficulties of the wild setting surrounding them. But it was not until 1866 that the Government took charge of them to prevent their destruction, having realized that they rank as one of the natural wonders of the world. Sixty square miles around these caves has been reserved as a sanctuary for animal, bird, and plant life, particular attention being paid by the Government to the protection of the latter, and it would be a good thing if the same care were bestowed on the plant life in England. Rock wallabies, which are nearing extinction, have a good home in this reserve, and apparently realize they are immune from all destroyers, for many of them have become so tame that they will actually take food from the hands of the visitors. Other attractive inhabitants of the reserve are the wonderful and gorgeously plumaged parrots, lyre-birds, and bower-birds of the satin species, and the parrots have become quite as tame as the wallabies. In years to come I have no doubt that opossums will have followed suit.

At Katoomba, which is about 3400 feet above sea level and cradled on one of the topmost peaks of Australia's chief mountain range, I was surprised to find quite a large resort surrounded by marvellous scenery, for as I stood on the edge of a precipice,

there spread around me more beautiful waterfalls, giant cliffs which dropped 2000 feet below, and fairy-like fern glens, all interlaced with sparkling crystal brooks, shaded by several varieties of giant trees.

And so you will agree I had every reason to be fascinated with the Blue Mountains, through which I motored without any mishap, and I carried away a memory of what must surely be one of the healthiest and most beautiful places in the world.

#### THE ABORIGINALS

When I first saw the aborigines of Australia I unconsciously compared them with African natives, and despite the many tribes in the latter country, I quickly realized that these natives were some of the most primitive I had ever seen. I estimate that the aborigines will be the first to disappear of all native tribes, for to me they seemed to be the most backward, although in saying this I am not forgetting the difficulties they have experienced, nor how they must have suffered since the white man took possession of their lands. One's mind has only to think of the waterless country, where every drop of liquid is wanted for the new settler and his cattle, so that the native has to move on, or die of thirst. It is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact that the white man has thrust out the black, and from what I learnt, I should say this has partly come about because the aboriginal appears, for several reasons, to be of



very little use to the settler. Now it may seem strange to the reader, but the following quotation is from a book written by an Australian writer, Theodore Fink : " Our blacks have steadily shrunk in numbers. Here, as elsewhere, the invading white man has spoiled much of the face of Nature, and depleted its resources. With the lessening of our strange animal and plant life has come the shrinkage of the original human dwellers." Quite so, but I feel sure that this state of affairs is due to the blacks not adapting themselves to changing conditions, as they have done in other countries. At first I was naturally surprised at the absence of native life in the towns, but when I had met the aboriginal I quite understood the reason.

The boomerang, a weapon which the natives of the interior use with such skill and effect, is a hard piece of wood about two feet long, shaped rather like a scythe, which is hurled through the air by the savages at any object they wish to strike. I have always been fascinated by the boomerang, and one day I was fortunate enough to witness a demonstration by the aboriginals, but it was of the " come back " type, which is smaller, and more sharply curved than the former kind. It was far from being an ideal day, for there was both wind and rain, and yet the way that piece of wood behaved was really uncanny, for it seemed impossible to throw a bit of curved wood about a foot and a half long for a great distance, and then expect it to return to the thrower's feet, and yet that is what it did do, although I think the wind made it behave

erratically because several times the natives had to jump quickly out of the way when it did not return in its normal course, as they anticipated it would. I bought several boomerangs for boys in England, and the first one to receive his gift grew wildly excited and said : “ Do you know, sir, this is a most surprising coincidence, for I wrote an essay on the boomerang yesterday, and now I shall be able to take this to school to-morrow, and demonstrate it ! ” Remembering its uncanny antics, I anticipated his pals were in for a “ stunning ” time, in every sense of the word.

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CHAPTER XIV

*Leaving Australia for New Zealand*

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## CHAPTER XIV

### LEAVING AUSTRALIA FOR NEW ZEALAND

**A**LAS, the day arrived, all too soon, when I had to say good-bye to this land of sunshine containing so many queer creatures—created centuries ago, many of them helpless and utterly divorced from this advanced twentieth century! Reluctantly I left this magnificent scenery, abundant wealth, and, above all, good friends in the true sense of the word, many of whom I shall always remember for their sincerity and extreme kindness, for I know of no other country where people have the same faculty of making one feel completely at home.

A great many of my Australian impressions originated from the people, who were ever ready to draw my attention to objects and places of interest, and to take endless trouble in arranging car excursions to visit them and to be lavishly entertained before and after such pleasurable trips. Maybe one of the reasons for their courtesy and hospitality is the great pride they take in their country, and this being so, I sincerely hope that this simple book, which makes no pretence at painting a complete picture of Australia, but merely to offer a general impression of its wonders, will do full justice to so great a country.

When we arrived on board the boat for New Zealand, our cabin resembled a florist's shop, for it was overflowing with beautiful baskets of all the marvellous blooms Australia is so proud of. In addition, there were fruits, books, curios, and

every kind of memento to speed us on our way. Hundreds of coloured streamers stretching from ship to shore, which linked us to our friends, gradually fluttered away as the vessel slowly glided from the pier. You can imagine how sad we felt.

I had intended, as always, to do a great deal of writing during the voyage, and to record my impressions whilst they were still fresh in my mind, but this good resolution, made on every voyage, always fades away with the land. Possibly it is due to the atmosphere of the ship, the sea air, or the surroundings which distract me, but whatever the reason, I invariably find myself spending a full day playing games, enjoying and applauding the efforts of other players, and always with my ear alert for the call of the dining saloon ! My pen lies idle in my cabin. My writing-pad remains blank. Little, if any, actual writing is done, but I am nevertheless securing "copy" by studying the passengers and picking out personalities and peculiarities. On this trip, many of them were going to the "Old Country" via America, and it was indeed pleasant to hear them refer to it as "home." Some were going to visit their children in various public schools which, incidentally, are educating many children of the Empire, a fact which must surely tend to tighten the bond between us.

I have always been a great Imperialist, and, if I had my way, I should compel every Member of Parliament to visit a certain number of the Empire's outposts before settling down in Westminster and

attempting to govern, for there is nothing like travel for enlarging one's views on life. Lord Nuffield was amongst the passengers, and we had frequent chats. He is a man full of energy and appearing to enjoy life to the full, but I thought, when looking at him, what anxious moments he must have had whilst building up his vast business, and with it, a vast fortune. What worries and sleepless nights, and yet as I watched him playing quoits and deck-tennis, he was the most carefree and happy player of all. He apparently has that rare propensity of being able to throw off all his cares at will, and for this I admire him greatly, in view of the magnitude of his work and his rapid rise to prosperity. But I always wonder whether millionaires are really happy, for think of the number of people hanging around them, admiring them for their money, and all those who keep in touch with the great men in the hope of securing some of it. But in the case of Lord Nuffield it was plain that money had not spoilt him, for a simpler and more unassuming man it would be hard to find.

As we were steaming along I noticed that the ship had changed her course, and upon enquiring the reason, the First Officer told me a wireless message had been received from another vessel stating that a boy on board was seriously ill with appendicitis, and so we were going to pick him up. The doctor and medical staff prepared to receive him, but after steaming for about a hundred miles and getting to within forty miles of the vessel in question, we suddenly changed our course again,

which seemed to me a bad sign, and I was right, for when I met the doctor he told me we were too late, for the poor lad had just died.

Reclining in my cabin, I could not help thinking of the old wooden-bottomed boats which the early pioneers of the Colonies had to rely on, to combat the heavy seas, and I wondered what they would have said about the luxury liner of to-day, fitted with every convenience from radio to refrigerator, and even allowing passengers to take their own fowls on board, to keep them supplied with fresh eggs.

As I pen these pages news has come through that Jean Batten has completed her marvellous flight from England to Auckland, New Zealand, proving once again that exploration is no longer the monopoly of man, especially in the air. But a few months ago Jean Batten had tea with us in London, and I must admit that in appearance one would never dream she would have the stamina to withstand the long strain of flying to New Zealand, and it is marvellous to learn she has accomplished this wonderful feat in the record time of eleven days, one hour, and twenty-five minutes. The race to Johannesburg pales into insignificance beside it, and, what is even more to the point, she achieved it by herself. Lack of sleep and the strain of being alone, together with the mental agony experienced during eleven anxious days of varying weather conditions, quite apart from concentrating upon the mechanical control of the 'plane, must have been terrific and I take off my hat to her when

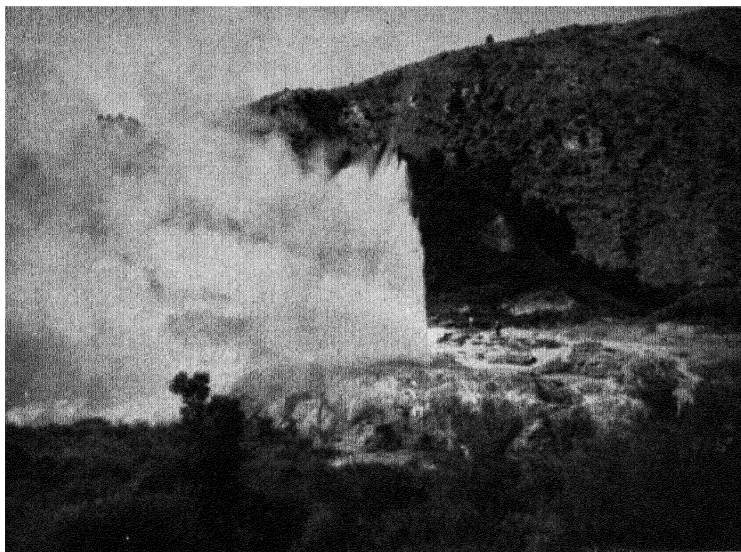




LAKE ROTORUA



FAIRY SPRINGS AND RAINBOW TROUT—ROTORUA



GEYSER THROWING BOILING WATER TO A HEIGHT OF SIXTY FEET  
WHILST CLOSE BY CHILDREN ENJOY A WARM BATH—ROTORUA



HOT SPRINGS AT WAIRAKEI

I think of my experience as the first passenger with Spencer in his dirigible which flew over London in May, 1908. It is true we had a seven horse-power engine and a canvas propeller, but after ascending fourteen thousand feet, I vowed I would never go up again, but the war changed my mind, and I spent a year with the Royal Naval Air Service, and flew in the first machine that entered Africa. This pioneering work in the air, coupled with my journeys round the world, enabled me fully to appreciate and praise Jean Batten's noteworthy feat.

During the latter part of our voyage the weather turned cold and rainy, so that I was glad when we sighted Auckland, where fortunately it was much warmer. For some time before we landed radio-grams began to arrive, which were most encouraging, one of them offering me an extensive lecturing tour, which clearly showed me that even in such a far corner of the earth there was deep interest in the world of Nature, for one must remember that New Zealand is not primarily an animal country ; that is, its species of wild life are very meagre.



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CHAPTER XV

*Auckland*

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## CHAPTER XV

### AUCKLAND

**A**UCKLAND was the capital of New Zealand until 1863, when Wellington superseded it in view of its central position, the transfer taking place in 1865. Auckland is a busy city set in beautiful surroundings, and possessing an atmosphere and temperature typical of the soft half-tropics, and the mildness of New Zealand's climate is truly exemplified in the profusion of beautiful blooms which adorn the gardens of its suburbs. Here an abundance of foliage, fruit, and flowers frames not only the charming houses, but also the vivid green countryside and the great parks covering the crater-topped hill-cones, set in wonderful terraces, tier upon tier in perfect formation—the work of Maori warriors in days long since past.

Horse-racing in New Zealand is regarded as the “King of Sports,” and almost every centre has a course where meetings are held throughout the year, Ellerslie Course, on the outskirts of Auckland, being particularly attractive and surrounded by magnificent displays of flowers.

On the night I went to talk over the air I was absolutely amazed at the fine broadcasting station which confronted me. It was a new building and up to the minute in every modern detail. Dignified simplicity was the keynote of the perfectly designed interior, and the floors were covered with a thick rubber substance, artistically patterned, that made walking noiseless. The studios were the last word

in comfort, one thoughtful detail, in particular, pleasing me immensely, which was an ingenious adaptable rest for one's script. It could be tilted to any angle, so that one did not have to lean over awkwardly to read, and as the lights were also adjustable, a perfect broadcasting position was easily arranged. An illustration showing how very small the world is occurred just before my talk, when one of the Cherniavsky Brothers, who had just broadcast, entered the main hall and greeted my wife whom he had not seen for many years. He, too, was on a visit to New Zealand. Immediately I had finished broadcasting the telephone began to ring, and soon I was speaking to various people, miles away, whom I had not seen for practically forty years.

Now although animal life does not abound in New Zealand, there is no scarcity of bird life, and many English species such as thrushes, blackbirds, skylarks, goldfinches, and yellow hammers, have been introduced into the country, with great success, their songs creating charming memories of the Old Country for the settler. Among the New Zealand birds there are quite a number which have become rare, but, according to reliable authorities, are still holding their own against complete extinction. But some species, such as the kiwi, are, sad to relate, becoming seriously rare, and consequently it is pleasing to learn of the existence of the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society.

Some of the vanishing species are priceless

specimens of a past age, and no efforts are being spared to preserve them from extinction. In this connection I would refer again to the kiwi, which possesses many of the characteristics of the ostrich. This strange bird is compensated for an absence of wings by being blessed with great swiftness of foot. Its bill is very long and smooth, the nostrils being placed at the very tip, as a provision for when it plunges the bill into the ground in search of food. Its plumage both looks and feels like hair, and the body is mounted on short, thick, and very strong legs, the feet being armed with powerful claws. It differs from all other birds by having no tail, and also no other lays so large an egg as the kiwi in proportion to its size. It usually hides by day in a burrow, or a hole, under the roots of a tree, but when darkness falls it emerges and wanders about freely, uttering the shrill call which has given it the name of kiwi. As it rambles through the dense fern beds it uses its strong clawed feet to scratch away any obstruction, and then it drives its long bill into the soft ground. Worms seem to constitute its main food, and it reveals a certain degree of intelligence and ingenuity when extracting one from the ground, for it works with extreme care and deliberation whilst drawing the worm out, giving the appearance that it is coaxing it to the surface rather than pulling it roughly and breaking it when it is only partly exposed, as so many birds do. When the kiwi finds it cannot urge the worm out any further, it leans back, looking rather bored, and waits without the faintest move-

ment, until the worm, tired out by its exertion, relaxes, and then the kiwi, with a calm steady pull, draws it out of the earth, throws up its head, and with a jerk swallows its victim whole. It also eats snails, insects, and berries. Usually only one egg is laid, and never more than two, and it is the male which carries out the duties of incubation. Having suffered a great deal from the attacks of dogs and stoats, to say nothing of hidden traps, it is now confined to a very limited area, where it is to be hoped it will continue to live in peace for a long time.

Many varieties of seabirds increase the attraction of the varied coast-line near Auckland, and several of the islands dotted around have been made into sanctuaries by the State, which will result in the preservation of many of the species for years to come, so that future generations shall not find them extinct. These islands are similar to those around the English coast, inasmuch as they have their own distinctive forms of bird life, and not only are these protected, but rare plants and reptiles are also preserved. Among these is the tuatara, and it is pleasing to learn that there are fair numbers of these creatures on the islands, living in complete harmony with petrels, shearwaters, and penguins, often sharing the same burrow, and it is remarkable that they frequently ignore each other whilst both are in a small nesting chamber. During the day they sleep, but at night the tuatara goes out to hunt for insects, whilst the petrel waits for its mate. Very occasionally the petrel chicks are destroyed by



A CHARMING MAORI GIRL



RANGI

the tuatara, but as a rule it does not harm them. He allows the petrel to do the digging, and then, with the small amount of energy he seems to possess, he slowly cleans out the burrow, during the absence of the birds, and catches any insects which may be about, and which do not need running after. When the petrels have left in the winter, the tuatara digs himself still further into the end of the burrow, to hibernate. Now I expect you are wondering what the tuatara really is, and your curiosity is quite justified, but instead of describing it immediately, I am going to tell of how I met one face to face. It so happened that a gentleman called at my hotel and placed his car at my disposal, explaining that he had given his collection of valuable curios to the museum and invited me to see them, a suggestion I readily accepted. The new museum astonished me by the noble and inspiring picture it created, standing high up on the outskirts of the town, which it overlooked, and the quay, for the City of Auckland stands on the shores of the beautiful Waitemata Harbour. I found that the museum was full of unique Maori objects, illustrating the past glories of the race, amongst them a splendid specimen of that triumph of savage seamanship, the war-canoe.

Upon meeting the curator I had a pleasant surprise, for he informed me they had two live tuataras which they kept on the roof of the museum, and it was arranged that on the following day they would be brought down to allow me to film them.

One proved to be a very fine specimen, although I was warned by the curator that it would not move, but he proved to be quite wrong, for every time I pointed the camera at it, it made a dash at me, covering the nine or ten feet between us with great rapidity. It had never been known to do this before, and it expended so much energy that the curator said : " Mr. Kearton, do you know that each time it ran towards you it took ten years off its life ? " Naturally, it was hard for me to believe this astounding statement, until it was explained, and proved to be correct. I was then informed they fed it on one snail a day, surely the cheapest diet ever heard of ! Being a creature that belongs to a distant age, when time did not matter, may account for it not eating very much, and resting most of the day. Apparently it has no worries, no ambitions, no nothing, so to speak, and is therefore a very refreshing creature to meet in these days of bustle, scurry, and excitement. As I gazed on it I could hardly realize that it was an animal linking the natural world of to-day to those monsters which lived on the earth of thousands of years ago, vastly bigger creatures, of course, and greatly resembling the present-day crocodile in shape. Such pre-historic animals have been extinct longer than the human mind can realize, and yet here, in New Zealand, is the tuatara creating the missing link. It is an insoluble mystery how it has survived through the centuries, in view of the fact that many parts of the world which are now dry land were once under water. Indeed, the tuatara is unique



in the world of to-day, but this fact does not make it in the least conceited. It merely lives on, quietly breeding in the many islands that once formed part of the mainland of New Zealand, which is the only corner of the world one can find it.

So ancient is its lineage that it belongs to the history of the earth before the appearance of either birds or mammals, when reptiles were the dominant form of life, it being the only living survivor of the Fossil Age, and although it outwardly resembles a lizard, with a curious bird-like skull, it is classed among reptiles such as snakes and crocodiles. Its teeth are merely sharp projections of the jaw-bone, and so, according to scientists, it is quite unable to differentiate between headache and toothache, which must be almost as annoying as the pain itself! The tuatara was first mentioned in the diary of Mr. Anderson, companion to Captain Cook, and it is interesting to note that once upon a time it had a third eye on the top of its head, to enable it to watch for approaching enemies whilst eating, and although that eye is now sightless, it proves conclusively its relationship to the giant reptiles of long ago. It breathes once in seven seconds, and, at certain periods, has been known to stop breathing for a whole hour. In addition to this extraordinary fact, it seldom moves, which probably accounts for its long life—the maoris having a record of one which lived for nearly three hundred years in one place. Its colour is brown, and it appeared to me to be rather spotted, and

it has abdominal ribs which afford it the same protection as do the abdominal plates in tortoises and turtles, and from these ribs, projecting backwards, are similar organs to those found in crocodiles and birds.

The eggs of the tuatara are deposited in a burrow covered with sand and left to hatch by the heat of the sun and the moisture in the ground. This takes about twelve months, which is quite the longest period I know of. When hatched, the babies are only about five or six inches long, but when fully grown they will measure about two feet. Stretching along the ridge of the back, from crown to tail, is a crest of spines, which give it a most formidable appearance, although when I touched them I found to my surprise they were quite soft and flexible, but they are undoubtedly inherited from the tuatara's ancestors, which used them in their original hard form for defence.

The extermination of this creature has been brought about by the introduction of the pig into New Zealand, many of which have gone wild.

On the day following my interesting visit to the museum, I found myself on the top of an extinct volcano, with the gaping crater at my feet and a magnificent view of Auckland and the surrounding country facing me. I then walked down winding paths and through a delightful park, until I reached the zoo, charmingly situated partly on a hillside and partly on level ground, through which a small stream ran. Despite the great number of

interesting exhibits, I was disappointed to find the place practically empty, and after wandering around for some time, found myself in the elephants' quarter, where one was in a very bad temper, and upon going closer, I saw the reason why, for at certain periods an elephant becomes dangerous, and whilst in that condition one has to be extremely careful. I remember seeing one in a bad mood at the New York Zoo, many years ago, and I warned the keeper, but, thinking he knew better, he merely smiled at me. However, within two days he was caught by that elephant, and very nearly killed by being pierced in the thigh by the great beast's tusk, and had it not been that he was in a corner, he would, in all probability, have been crushed to death.

However, reverting to the Auckland Zoo, I did not think any more about the angry elephant I had seen until a few days later, when on my way down south, I read in the papers that one had been shot, for it appeared that the committee had been sitting in judgment on it whilst I was looking at it in the zoo.

One of the best exhibits was the polar bear section, a large stretch of water, at least a hundred feet long, with an island in the centre, that was the cleverest replica of snow and ice I have seen. One of the bears was lying on this "frozen" land eating a fish, and around him were the remains of another he had been devouring. Three seagulls stood nearby planning to swoop in and seize the

pieces. One of them would strut over to the back of the bear and attract his attention, whilst the others popped in and snatched the food. This was repeated time after time, the birds cleverly changing places. I spotted this ruse because one of them had a dark patch on his wing, whilst another was rather smaller than the other two. But a few minutes later I learnt that artfulness is not confined to the feathered world. It being a very hot day, we were taking tea in the shady verandah of the pavilion, when two ladies appeared, one with a small child in her arms, and the other leading a chubby little fellow about five years old by the hand. They sat down at one of the adjoining tables, and having given their order to the waitress, the two women and the small child wandered down the steps to watch the polar bears, leaving the little boy lolling on his chair, as he had said he was too *tired* to walk any further. The bears must have proved most fascinating, for the ladies were away a long time, during which the waitress had returned with the tea-tray and a large plate of iced cakes of every known and unknown colour. The boy's eyes gleamed as he saw them, and all his tiredness appeared to vanish, for he sat up suddenly, drank all the milk in the jug and then devoured nearly all the cakes, stuffing them into his mouth as fast as he could. He was almost hysterical with delight, and quite unconscious of his surroundings, when, alas, the ladies returned ! May I discreetly draw a veil over the rest of the story, although I must add that I enjoyed the

incident quite as much as the boy, and I am firmly convinced that this was not the first time he had pleaded *tiredness*. The fact that he ended by being very “fed up” made it all worth while.



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CHAPTER XVI

*Glow-worm Caves*

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## CHAPTER XVI

### GLOW-WORM CAVES

**W**E left Auckland for Wellington by car, as I wished to explore the highways and, more especially, the byways, and places of interest *en route*. We passed through some excellent farming country, where the dairy industry on an advanced scale was much in evidence, everything being done on a scientific scale that was up to date in all details. A great deal of the countryside reminded me very much of England, and the charm of the Waikato River is difficult to adequately describe. It is very broad in parts, and fringed for miles with beautiful weeping-willows of the softest green, which bend and sway in the breeze as they lean gracefully over the water.

Opposite the mining town of Huntly is a large Maori settlement known as Waahi, and further south, Ngaruawahia, which is a very beautiful spot despite its impossible name. Nearly a century ago it was the primitive capital of the Maori kingdom, and to-day it abounds in beautiful trees, which include the oak and the ash, that reminded me of my home in Surrey.

The heat of the sun was tempered by a fresh breeze which was most exhilarating, making the first morning of our motor trip very enjoyable. After stopping for luncheon at Hamilton, we covered a considerable mileage at high speed, as we had a longish journey to complete, but we paused to study the spot where some of the early settlers had been massacred by Maoris, and also nearby, Te

Awamutu, where a fierce battle took place with the Maoris on April 3rd and 4th in 1864, when one hundred and thirty rebels out of three hundred were killed and wounded, seventeen Europeans killed, and fifty-five wounded. This was the last Maori battle in the Waikato. Then the scenery changed in character again, and we found ourselves amidst the rich volcanic and limestone region known as the King Country, and it was quite apparent that the white man had secured a good footing in this old-time district, for cars were passing and repassing, trains were puffing along, where, but a few years back, Maori fanatics had performed their wild war-dances. Modern activity and the mechanical transport upon which it depends had transformed the place. To nature-lovers, the King Country offers ever variety of scenic beauty—lofty forest-clad mountains, rushing rivers, and tumbling waterfalls ; marvellous limestone stalactite caves, and sparkling brooks tinkling through green groves of drooping fern-trees. From high up in the hills one sees, stretching away to the horizon, an expanse of open country on the one side, and on the other, gently sloping valleys, dotted here and there with homesteads and tree-bowered farms. The King Country abounds in Nature's eccentricities in the form of subterranean streams, which appear and disappear in the most unexpected places, often leading into stalactite caves of great beauty, the most wonderful being the Waitomo and Ruakuri Caverns.

On the edge of a little valley through which a

stream wandered stood a most modern hotel in perfect surroundings, approached by a sweeping drive in which a number of smart cars were parked. I had no sooner entered the lounge when a voice greeted me which I had not heard for nearly forty years, and there stood before me a lady who had been brought up on a farm at Merstham, in Surrey, which I used to visit in my early days of photography, nearly fifty years ago. New Zealand must have treated her very kindly, for she had never been back to England since she left thirty-five years ago, and her enthusiasm for the country was simply marvellous. I was full of admiration for her, and she made me feel that if the pioneer spirit were more developed at home there would be less unemployment and fewer young people marrying on the dole, which is most disgraceful. I know that building up a new life in a country like New Zealand means hard work, but what man is any good if he does not possess an appetite for it? The attraction of living and working in a colony like this is that whatever one does, whether it be manual or mental work, there is no social stigma attached to it. The bricklayer's career is as important as the lawyer's, and the only qualification for success is honesty. Only last summer the uncle of the lady I have referred to visited England at the age of seventy-five. He was a picture of health, and as bright as any young fellow of thirty, full of vigour, and enthusiastic in his praise for the land of his adoption. Now, he has only been in New Zealand for about twelve years, and yet he has made good

by sheer hard work. It is indeed a pity there are not more like him, for what an example he is to the young people of England !

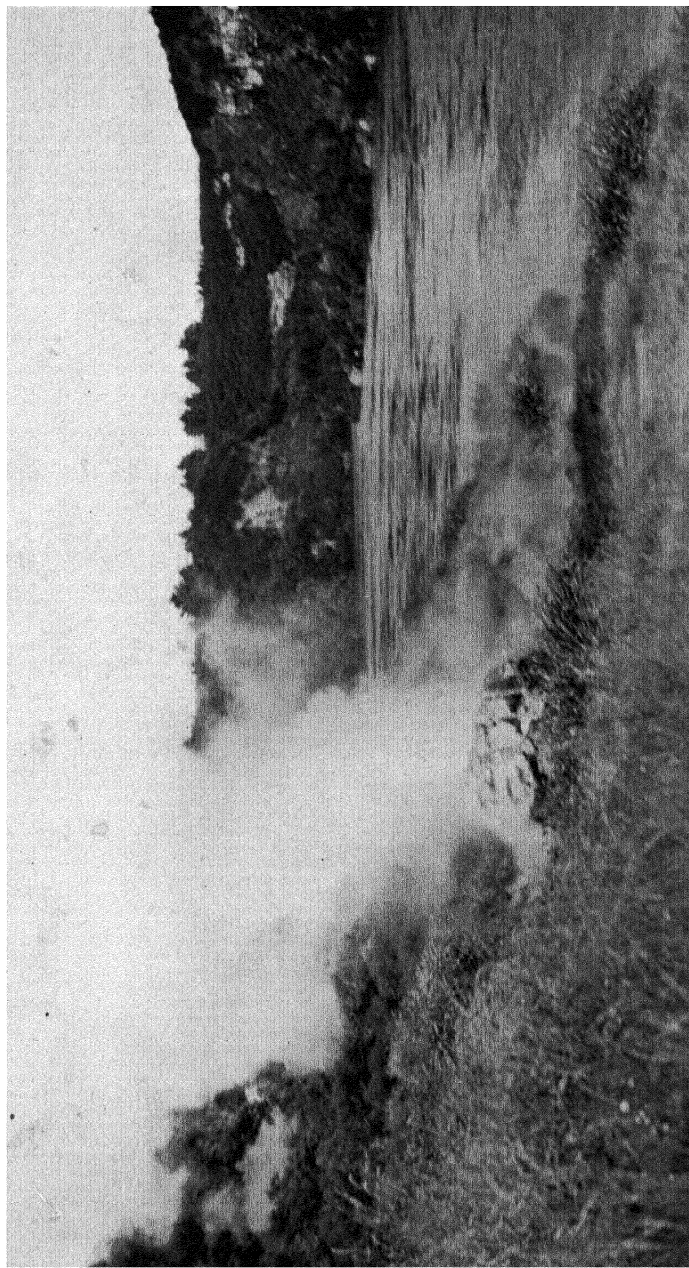
Standing on the verandah of the hotel I was told that the bush track stretching before me led to one of the caves—the Ruakuri—which I entered a little later, and immediately I had stepped inside my feelings underwent a curious change, in fact I imagined I had been instantly transported to another world of fantastic beauty. Here stalagmites and stalactites were so wonderful that they baffle description, some being pure white and others of an exquisite creamy hue, were framing the entrances to tortuous chasms that presented a most weird appearance. Surrounded by those lurking shadows the outer world seemed not to exist, for here all the centuries that had passed rose up before one, creating a vivid, almost solid darkness in which one felt the spirits of ancient generations were present. The dramatic effect was heightened by the muffled thunder of a hidden waterfall, that sounded like the groaning of some tortured monster imprisoned for eternity. There are at least a dozen wide and lofty halls in this cavern all connected by passages, some of the stalactites and stalagmites being about the thickness of a lead pencil, although others are many feet in thickness, which denotes their great age.

It is recorded that the Maoris knew of the entrance to these caves for generations, but that no native ever dared to explore them, as the race had a great aversion to entering caves, which were regarded as

the abode of spirits and ghosts. "Ruakuri" means "The Cave of Dogs," and a local legend attributes this to the fact that a number of wild Maori dogs used to live at the entrance to the cave. These animals were killed for the sake of their skins, which were highly valued, and made into white dog-skin mats that were worn by the chiefs. At a later date the recesses near the entrance to the Ruakuri Cave were used by the Maoris as burial-places. After passing through the rocky portals of the second cavern known as the Waitomo, or Glow-worm Cave, which, incidentally, is a mile from the Ruakuri, and quite separate, we passed through a narrow winding passage, up steps, and slowly descended others, until we found ourselves in even more amazing surroundings resembling glistening vaulted cathedrals, their mysterious beauty enhanced by the artistic use of concealed electric lights. Long snowy stalactites hung from the domed ceilings of white rock, sparkling with countless beads of moisture, that looked like suspended diamonds of the rarest transparency. At the far end of one of these halls stood an astonishing natural replica of a great organ created by stalactites, and in another chamber a curious formation resembled a huge blanket hanging in heavy folds. And then we descended even lower into the bowels of the earth, down a wide stairway, at the foot of which our guide paused and whispered: "Not a sound, please, or the glow-worms will put their lights out!" As silently as shadows we walked on through the tomb-like atmosphere, ultimately reach-

ing the edge of an underground river, and then we stepped into a flat-bottomed boat. Without a word being spoken we glided away over the black water, into the mysterious darkness, and the intense silence of the cave seemed to petrify our tongues, for we could not have spoken if we had wished to. Thus we entered Wonderland, and found ourselves floating beneath a luminous sky of glow-worms, for the entire roof was lit by a myriad living stars, creating a pale-blue diffused glow, that was just sufficient to enable us to see the magical formation of the caves. The winding stream was bordered by mud banks on which small flies breed, and upon these the glow-worms feed.

I took one of "Nature's candles" off a rock, and found it to be a slimy, fragile creature, about an inch long, and of a greyish colour. It was quite transparent, so that its internal organs were visible, reminding me of the transparent lizard of the Sahara. The glow-worm fly has four stages in its evolution—the egg, the larva or grub, the pupa, or resting stage, and the fly. In a most ingenious way it makes a silken thread, sometimes two feet long, covered with a very sticky substance, and this is suspended from the rocks. Small flies, attracted by the light, just as moths are lured by lamps, became entangled in the thread, and their struggles create vibrations, thereby attracting the attention of the larva above, which winds up the hanging thread and eats the catch. The larva is so sensitive to sound vibrations, which act as danger-signals, that it will instantly dim its lights, or switch them



CROW'S NEST GEYSER BY THE SIDE OF THE RIVER



(Above) KEAS—THE NEW ZEALAND PARROT

(Below) BUBBLING MUD POOLS



out completely, even at the distant sound of a human voice. I discovered that this type of glow-worm lives for several months, and when the grub has reached its full size it re-absorbs the hanging thread, and passes through the amazing evolution that is the fate of all higher insects—from grub to pupa—and during this period it retains its luminosity, but eats no flies. After a few days there emerges from the pupa a dark-winged fly, twice as large as a mosquito, and rather like a daddy-long-legs.

Having seen these extraordinary insects, there were no doubts left in my mind that New Zealand certainly possesses the most interesting species of luminous creatures I have ever seen. Upon emerging from these fantastic caves into broad daylight I felt I had penetrated into the very heart of Fairyland, for the beauty I had seen was truly unearthly. Now I cannot claim to believe in fairies, and yet my knowledge and experience of the world of nature leads me to say that if one really wishes to find them in the most alluring of all Fairylands, one must go straight to nature, for in the natural world there is more fantasy and fun, more mystery and magic, and more bewildering beauty than in all the cities man has ever built.



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CHAPTER XVII

*Thermal Region*

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## CHAPTER XVII

### THERMAL REGION

**W**ENDING our way across country to Rotorua, also known as the Thermal Region, or Geyserland, our first view was from the wooded range of Mamaku, a thousand feet above the lake, with its dark purple islet rising from the centre. By the waterside, at various points, we could see countless coils of smoky steam rising skywards, and as we drew closer the fumes of the sulphur springs reached our nostrils. Here hundreds of boiling springs welling from the superheated strata below, steaming pools, lakelets, ever-bubbling mud springs, and geysers of great size and energy, created the effect of a strange new land—as if we had landed on some different planet. Approaching still nearer to Rotorua we stopped for a while at the “Fairy Spring,” a noted spawning-ground for rainbow trout, which presents another natural paradox, for here is a clear, cold, crystal spring, inhabited by scores of fish weighing over a pound, the water bubbling up continuously through coloured sands. The fish came from the beautiful lake nearby, and whilst in this Fairy Spring, are strictly protected, consequently they have no fear of man, and some of them actually fed from my hand, which sounds rather a fishy story, which, of course, it is. But it also happens to be perfectly true ! I then entered Geyserland, a mile away, my hotel being close to the lake, and it was not long before I went on a voyage of discovery, as I had seen several visitors coming in with fine catches of fish.

I then learnt that this district was one of the most famous fishing centres in the country, one fisherman telling me he had just been to the "Sportsman's Paradise" in the northern coastal waters of New Zealand, which draws many famous sportsmen from all parts of the world, and where swordfish, mako, shark, and other big-game fish abound.

From the window of my hotel I observed that the streets of Rotorua were built on modern lines, that is to say, they were parallel, and shaded by avenues of trees, and, generally speaking, I should think this must be the most cosmopolitan little town in the North Island, for I met every kind of nationality there. A good road led up to the Maori village, and in spite of the modern character of the town the village was utterly different, and seemed rather uncanny, it having lost much of its picturesqueness by contact with civilization, so that it was neither ancient nor modern, most of the people being dressed in European fashion. The village was built right on the hot-springs, and on the left of it there was a mud lake from which clouds of steam rose out of the bubbling depths. From the back and front of each wooden shack steam seemed to be coming, and so what living conditions could have been like I cannot imagine, nor why these people should choose to live in a perpetual Turkish bath in view of so much beautiful and available country around them. As I passed through the village I noticed large oblong blocks of cement, eight feet long by three or four feet high, with

carved wooden images towering over them. These were on both sides of the path, and I learnt I was walking through the Maori's burial-ground, and that bodies lay inside the cement. Fifty yards farther on I came to the main geyser, which suddenly began to play, discharging hundreds of tons of boiling water up to a height of at least sixty feet, and as the wind was blowing away from me I walked up to within a few yards of it, but a Maori guide who had attached herself to me held tightly to my sleeve, for one is only allowed to walk on certain pathways, as this is a very dangerous place to wander about in, for the crust-like rock formation is very thin in places, and it would be useless to warn one after falling through it !

Some of the pools are beautifully clear, and tinged with a faint blue. By the side of the village there was one small pool full of happy Maori children bathing, and a few yards below it women were busy doing their washing, laughing and chatting in a most high-spirited way. Curiously enough the water in these places was at a much lower temperature, and yet only a few yards away I had noticed a box on the top of one small cone, where the women place their foods in bags and flax kits, and lower them into the boiling water, where they cook perfectly. The kettles are boiled by partly immersing them in the boiling water, so that the Maori has his fuel right at his door, there being no need to kindle fires, for Nature has supplied them. These cones reminded me of Yellowstone Park in the American Rockies, where I used to catch fish with rod and

line, whilst standing on the shores of a lake, and, without taking the fish off the line, lowered it to be cooked in one of the hot-spring cones, rising two feet out of the lake. Similarly, I once saw in Central Africa a big lion near the steam of a hot spring, in a part of the country which was new to me, and upon galloping up towards him he disappeared amongst a low ridge of rocks, at the foot of which was a boiling hot stream, two feet wide, and yet, barely ten feet away, was another spring of water about the same size, absolutely cold.

Later, I was taken into the garden of a resident, and amazed to see amongst the profuse flowers of every colour, including some lovely roses, a sulphur mud-pot gurgling and bubbling away, and here again the same strange comparison existed, for less than a mile away the rainbow trout were living in a stone-cold spring, and these extraordinary contrasts can be seen throughout this strange land. Whilst in this place I happened to be admiring the real Maori dress worn by a young native girl about sixteen years of age, and when I spoke to her I was very surprised to hear her answering me not only in perfect English, but with a mellow, soft, and cultured voice, and as time passed and I studied more and more of these people, I found that almost without exception they had beautiful speaking voices.

Reverting to the mysterious geysers, which have always fascinated me, I learnt that they can be encouraged to "play" by throwing a bar of soap into the boiling cone, and, if I remember rightly,



this practice is prohibited in Yellowstone Park. It is, of course, many years since I was there, and yet one story always lingers in my mind in connection with the "Old Faithful Geyser," which sends forth a jet of water one hundred feet high, and plays regularly every hour, to the exact minute. Now a large wooden hotel was built close to it, and a Chinaman was in charge of the laundry. One day he noticed these hot-water cones were about a foot high, and three feet across, and a brain-wave occurred to him that there was a chance to get his washing done without effort. Accordingly, he erected a tent over the cone, took all his washing inside, threw most of it into the almost boiling water, and also a bar of soap for lather. Luckily for him he went back for something he had forgotten, for he had walked only a few yards from the tent when it was blown sky-high, with the washing soaring upwards in all directions ! This story came back to me as I sat watching New Zealand's geysers.

We were invited by Rangi, a well-known Maori personality, to view her house, which proved to be a beautiful carved building standing in a small garden, well stocked with flowers. Upon the rafters were delightfully painted designs, and the interior was most attractive, being simple and dignified. On the floor were matted rugs and skins, and thrown over one of the couches was a handsome Maori beaded skirt. An atmosphere of comfort pervaded the place, created by the bright and intelligent personality of this well-informed woman. In fact, the intelligence of the whole Maori race made a

deep impression on me, just as it had done on the early British settlers. Dancing and singing come naturally to Maori villagers, and in the Poi dance, which is the special pride of the younger women, the performers delight the eye with their graceful postures and rhythmic movements. Incidentally, Rangi proved to be an expert in the management of the long Poi, and at my request she kindly gave me a demonstration, and its fascinating rhythm recreated all the departed glories of the great Maori race. Standing in the middle of her garden was a large wooden square block, about ten feet high, and my wife praised the wonderful carving on it. "Yes," said Rangi, "the Maoris are expert carvers, and my father modelled that before he died, so that it could be placed at the head of my mother's grave, but I thought it would look very much better in my garden." Strange reasoning, but there was no doubt of the fine workmanship, achieved with the simplest of tools.

I do not know whether it was the soft beauty of the lake, or the effect of the sulphur fumes, but I certainly felt extremely lazy during my stay in Rotorua, and yet despite this I saw practically everything there was to see, and penetrated deeply into the legendry of this ancient civilization which continues to thrive in a highly progressive country.

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CHAPTER XVIII

*Volcanoes*

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### VOLCANOES

**C**LIMBING over the mountains from Rotorua we came upon a simmering region guarded by two remarkable mountains, which bore every sign of intense volcanic activity in the past. The one on our left was named "Maunga-Kakarama," meaning "Mountain of Coloured Earth," which is generally known as the Rainbow Mountain on account of the variety of colours in the clay rock and fissured sides of the shattered crater cliffs. Leaving the main road, we journeyed along a lane for four miles through dense bracken and ferns, nearly running over a wild pig that crossed the road right in front of our car, and a little later, as we were travelling along a high mountain ridge, we disturbed a deer, which bounded gracefully away into the fern-covered hill-side, and the sight of it was most refreshing to me, for deer were the first animals I had seen in their wild state in New Zealand, and the feeling was strong within me to stop awhile and explore the region. Stalking can be done in comfort in this country, for there are no dangerous animals or snakes to intimidate one, so that the gloomiest of woods and forests lose their terror. However, I did not pause there, as I knew that once I started to walk through those tempting glades I should lose all sense of time, and would probably emerge hours later. And so we drove on and a mile farther along the ridge brought us to a little tea-house from which we had another fine view down into a deep valley, and across to the

opposite sloping hill-side, in which there was a huge cavity from which smoke rose in great puffs. This proved to be a large volcano that had recently been active, and I felt rather sorry to have missed the magnificent sight it must have created when its fury was at its height, from this safe vantage-point.

The Wairakei Valley is yet another place of wonders, and the hotel we stayed at was buried right in a valley of trees, it being different to any other because a warm river ran through its grounds which served the purpose of supplying constant hot baths for visitors. This unique facility greatly tickled me, especially when I observed several guests walking past my window and down the woodland path in bathing-suits before dinner. Being curious, I followed them, and found that Nature's bathroom was most entrancing, being naturally formed and screened by overhanging trees and ferns, whilst the whole scene was dimly illuminated with coloured lights hung on to the branches, creating a most charming and rather weird effect.

The first thing one notices in this valley is the number and variety of hot springs that function in a most fantastic way, some taking the form of waterfalls, and others bubbling boiling pots, whilst several of the geysers play with clocklike regularity. "The Twins," for instance, play every four minutes, whilst another called "The Dragon's Mouth" spouts every nine minutes.

It was a veritable wonderland of many colours, for terraces of silica glittered and gleamed, remind-

ing one of pink coral beds set amidst beautiful clusters of thick, soft mosses.

I was not permitted to enter this steaming hot valley without a guide, on account of its dangers, and, incidentally, the guide was a Maori who knew his descriptive talk like a gramophone, and what is more, delivered it in a most polished and refined accent. One is inclined to forget, of course, that many of the Maoris in outlandish places have been students at the University, but this particular guide was going to be quite sure that no one forgot he had received a good education.

Between Wairakei and Lake Taupo the road overlooks the Huka Fall, where the river, fresh from the great lake, hurls itself through a narrow pass, and over a precipice. Several of the waterfalls are illuminated at night by electricity generated from their own power, which is a most progressive way of showing visitors the beauties, as well as the resources, of the country. But it was "The Crow's Nest" geyser, close to Lake Taupo, and above "The Spa," which I had heard so much about, and after climbing a footpath through dense woodland to the top of a hill, and descending again to a wide and swiftly-flowing river rushing through a gorge, I found on the water's edge, the famous "Crow's Nest," which played every three-quarters of an hour. I had only been waiting with my camera ready for a few minutes when the son of the late proprietor of "The Spa" joined me. There was no sign of life, not even a suggestion of steam in the cone, which was just over six feet in height and seven

feet across. My young companion, having spent his boyhood there, was able to give me a great deal of useful information, which made our patient vigil pass very pleasantly. As time went on and there was still no sign of any display from the "Crow's Nest," my chauffeur walked to within a few yards of the cone, with the idea of looking down into its gaping mouth, but my young friend, who had not seen him go, turned round and frantically shouted to him to keep away, and then explained to me that this geyser had a nasty habit of occasionally missing its regular display, and that it was apparently doing so now, a fact which reminded him of a stranger who grew tired of waiting and went to peer down into the cone, just as my chauffeur had intended to do, to look for some signs of life within, and as he put his head over the lip of the cone he heard a terrific rumbling sound, which instantly warned him of danger. Leaping backwards he rolled over, and was only just in time to miss the full force of the geyser as it blew up. Fortunately for him the wind was in the opposite direction, otherwise he would have been scalded to death. Now, strangely enough, no sooner had he finished telling me of this incident than we heard a low rumbling, and the next instant a column of spray and water gushed out and soared up to a distance of sixty feet, presenting a magnificent sight. For five minutes it "played," and then stopped, as if to rest, only to start again with renewed vigour, ultimately finishing on the third outburst. Each outburst grew less and less, until only the rumbling



sound was heard, which gradually died away. It was a most eerie performance, as there was nothing to show what active forces had been at work, and the only movement now came from the dark river, flowing swiftly and silently past, having no connection with the underground inferno.

Retracing our steps to the top of the hill, we turned into a narrow pathway which led to one of the most extraordinary sights I have ever beheld, for all around us were scalding mud-pools of a chalky colour, some making a curious "plop" sound as they bubbled. The edges and sides of many were tinged with red, yellow, pink, and even an exquisite shade of blue, making them quite attractive to look upon. They threw off a strong odour of sulphur which pervaded everything, and the amazing sight, coupled with the previous geysers I had seen, made me think furiously of the complex wonders of Nature, for here were scalding mud-pools, close to the isolated "Crow's Nest" geyser, belching forth boiling water, whilst within a few feet ran an icy-cold river !

After this we encountered Lake Taupo, which is the largest in New Zealand, being sixteen miles wide and twenty-five miles long, and as we skirted this miniature ocean the strong breeze lashed the water into angry waves, which dashed themselves to spray as they beat upon the rocks. Here we passed many Maori habitations, their tracks winding in and out of the bracken and skirting the banks of little creeks—the whole creating an impressive picture of wild scenery that will not easily be for-

gotten. I would have liked to spend some time here, but we had to proceed to the Château in the National Park, where we intended to stay for the night. A life-long rule of mine has been to start the day early, for I have always contended one lives a quarter of a lifetime longer than the man who rises late, and moreover, an early start enables one to see Nature in all her varying moods.

On the south of this great lake rise the volcanic mountains, Tongariro, Ngauruhoe, and Ruapehu, ranging in altitude from six thousand five hundred to nine thousand feet. These spectacular giants were given to the Government in 1887, by the Maori Chieftain, Te Heuheu Tukino, and are now enclosed in a hundred and fifty thousand acre National Reserve, embracing some of the most beautiful scenery imaginable for the artist, rich in mountain flora and immense forests. These mountains, to the Maoris, were the embodiment of their ancient gods, but of the three, Tongariro was the most sacred, and endless songs and stories of the mythical past are weaved around these sister cones. Despite the fact that I have lived beneath the mighty Kilimanjaro, in Africa, which is 20,000 feet high, and covered with perpetual snow, I was greatly impressed by these volcanoes, particularly as the surrounding scenery, so wild and bleak, provided such an appropriate setting for them. Unfortunately, I was prevented from taking any photographs, for the clouds suddenly rolled up and blotted out the scene entirely. When we were about five miles from the Château, the

clouds lifted and I saw the mountains from quite a new aspect, and I was just congratulating myself on the fact that I should reach the Château in time to secure my photographs, when something went wrong with the car and the chauffeur had to spend some time before thinking he had located the trouble, and then he jumped in, saying : “ Now we shan’t be long,” but he had spoken too soon, for the car refused to budge. He took another look inside, outside, and underneath, and then I gently suggested he might look at the petrol supply, which he did, and I heard him mumbling furiously to himself : “ Not a damn drop ! ” Both time and daylight were fast disappearing, and I grew more and more anxious to get away, when a very dilapidated lorry crawled up to us. “ Saved,” I said to myself, but I was wrong, for the driver assured me, and I am sure he spoke the truth, that he hardly had sufficient petrol to last him to his journey’s end, and the only encouragement he could give me was that there was a petrol pump about ten miles away ! In the distance, under the shadow of Ruapehu, nestling against a background of forest trees, lay the Château ! What were we to do ? And then a private car came along and the driver stopped to enquire if he could be of assistance, but none of us could find any means of transferring petrol from one car to the other, and when I suggested using my best hat as a basin, I received a most scornful look and he drove on. Suddenly the chauffeur had a brain-wave, for by pushing the car about fifty yards along the road we came to

the brow of a long, sloping hill ; we all jumped in and the car ran down on its own impetus, but when we reached the bottom we were stuck again ! Darkness was descending, it was becoming intensely cold, and I was just trying to reconcile myself to spending another three hours on the road whilst the chauffeur walked to secure the petrol, when a small car appeared, apparently from nowhere, the driver of which kindly volunteered to go to the Château and borrow a gallon for us. Thus we were saved, and he earned my eternal gratitude.

In and around the park framing the Château one can wander amongst the most varied scenery, and in the winter it must be truly delightful, for the lure of snow is irresistible to all, although to the majority of people in England, winter sports are not usually connected with New Zealand, and yet here the winter snow is unequalled.

I was rather pressed for time, having spent far too long on the road, and as I was due in Wellington to broadcast, and also to attend several functions, I reluctantly sent my car back to Auckland and continued the rest of the journey by rail, passing through a snow storm on the way to the station. Wellington, named after the Duke of Wellington, has an extremely important asset in its sheltered, deep harbour covering about thirty square miles, and over the steep hills embracing it settlement has expanded in all directions. Houses are perched one above the other, some standing out in relief, like miniature castles, giving the impression that a severe gale might blow them over. The roads

are well graded, and offer tempting invitations to travellers, both on foot and by car, to enjoy the fresh sea breezes and the beautiful panoramic views of town and harbour.

I had been in Wellington only an hour when, on walking out of my hotel, someone touched me on the shoulder, and said : " Cherry Kearton, I believe ? " It proved to be a young man, quite unknown to me, who certainly deserved the success he had made of the career of his choice, which was detection, for he had recognized me from photographs in the press, and told me that his brother lived opposite to my sister in a little village in Westmorland.

After my broadcast that evening I was greeted by a family of Keartons, who were distant relations, and who had travelled all the way from Napier to meet me. This happy surprise was followed by a friendly and charming meeting with the Yorkshire Society of New Zealand.

On every hand we were warmly welcomed, from the Governor-General, Viscount Galway, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Savage (who, by the way, delayed a Cabinet Meeting in order to have a twenty minutes' chat with me), down to the little boy who was waiting outside my hotel when I left for the boat, with a model lion he had carved to give me as a parting souvenir.



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## *Epilogue*

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## EPILOGUE

**I** BEGAN this book by paying tribute to that great pioneer, Captain Cook, and I should like to conclude it by offering similar praise to Australia and New Zealand, with which his name will be forever associated, for here are lands of beauty and wonder, where rapid progress is subtly mingled with ancient charm, and where the old races accept civilization and yet manage to retain their picturesque individualities. The Maoris established themselves in New Zealand as far back as 1400, and yet they live there happily to this day, though in a vastly changed country, and are represented in the Parliament of New Zealand.

How best can I describe the chief characteristics of this vast, yet intimate country, for it possesses so many features, and all are equally important? Shall I be content by saying it offers the most spectacular and varied scenery in the world, ranging from mountains and canyons to quiet lakes and furious geysers, or shall I merely describe it as the Scenic Playground of the Pacific?

Twelve hundred miles link Australia to New Zealand, and together, these progressive countries offer unrivalled beauty, unequalled hospitality, and a most refreshing spirit of originality.

Here, too, are the greatest sheep-raising countries in the world, possessed of incomparable pasture lands and an advanced knowledge of agriculture in all its forms, the fertile soil and favourable climate aiding the sturdy farmers to prosperity.

Looking again at the great cities, with their tall, majestic buildings, their first-class broadcasting stations, their avenues, vast shopping centres, cinemas, and luxurious hotels, it is difficult to realize that once it was all just a great unexplored expanse. Abel Tasman was the first European to discover the islands in 1642, thinking they were part of the mainland of South America, and just over a hundred years later Captain Cook landed at Gisborne, circumnavigated the islands, and charted the coast. The great work of these early discoverers is reflected in the astonishing development of New Zealand which meets the eye everywhere to-day, that has evolved through the brave efforts and hard work of sturdy settlers who ventured forth from Britain, and who in ninety years have transformed wildness into highly developed farms and cities.

In all my travels over many years, in every strange corner of the globe, I have not seen so many curiosities in Nature as in Australia and New Zealand, both zoological and geological, and I carried away with me so many interesting mind-pictures that I hope I have painted the most vivid of them with some degree of accuracy, and yet, however gifted the pen of an author may be, he could never hope to portray with sufficient realism the delightful character of this continent, which Nature must be especially fond of, for she has showered her paints on the landscape so generously. Consequently, whether it be flowers or foliage, mountains or mists, water or wings, colour glorifies them to such

an extent that one seems to be always encircled by rainbows.

As the boat bound for England began its long journey I stood on deck watching the coast-line recede into the distance, until it merged into the horizon, and then memory superimposed itself over memory, as I recalled the happy times I had spent there. Now, the rising hills and the sweeping valleys were lost in the distance—the songs of the multi-coloured birds were replaced by the music of the waves, and I realized that the finest way to describe Australia and New Zealand was to say they bring poetry to life. This, indeed, is a vivid truth, and Keats might well have had these happy lands in mind when he wrote, “The Poetry of earth is never dead.” Shakespeare, too, wrote :

And this our life, exempt from public haunt  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

It is only in the realms of poetry that one can seek and find words which do justice to the wonders of Nature, which are forever linked in my mind with Australia and New Zealand.



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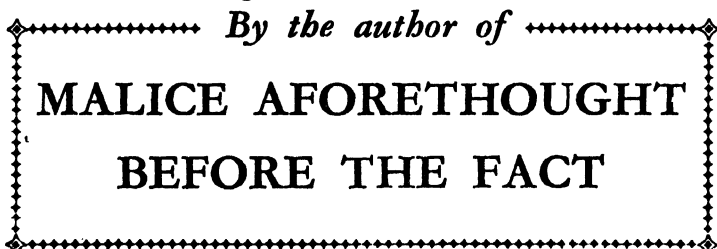
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*Thirty-three years old and married, Thomas Bell was born in Braddock, Pennsylvania, where his father was a steel worker and a bartender. He got a job at fifteen in the steel mills, and has since worked in railway shops, electric shops, a machine shop, and a book store. He also went to sea for two years. His two previous novels are "Equestrian Portrait" and "Striker Go Down".*



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